

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND THE ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

*Final Report*

## ***Land Reform in Italy:***

***Observations on the Changing Face of the Mediterranean***

GEORGE KISH

*Under Contract with:*

Office of Naval Research  
Contract No. Nonr 1224(28)  
NR 389-122

*Administered through:*

June 1966

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T H E U N I V E R S I T Y O F M I C H I G A N

COLLEGE OF LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND THE ARTS

Department of Geography

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LAND REFORM IN ITALY:

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George Kish

ORA Project 0-28-93

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## Preface

It was my good fortune to spend 1951-1952, the first year of the Italian land reform, in Italy, on a Fulbright research appointment, and witness the beginnings of an exciting experiment in land use and land tenure. Out of the observations of that time grew a desire and a hope to undertake a detailed study of the land reform, and thanks to the generosity of the Geography Branch, Office of Naval Research, the hope became reality. It is to the Geography Branch that I am deeply indebted for support of the project, and to the Office of Research Administration, University of Michigan, for technical assistance they so fully provided.

The field studies for the project were conducted in Italy during June-September, 1959 and February-September, 1960. In 1960, my student, David L. Wheeler, accompanied me in the field; his report on his part of the study was submitted in the form of a doctoral dissertation, "Land Reform and Reclamation in the Po River Delta" (University of Michigan unpublished dissertation, 1961).

I have followed closely the fortunes of the Italian land reform since its inception: the present study is an attempt to sum up observations gathered from published books and articles, from unpublished reports of government agencies, and during four seasons in the field. The greatest share of the credit is due to the Office of Naval Research, whose sponsorship of the study provided precious time for first-hand investigations. Officials of the Italian Ministry of

Agriculture and of the Southern Fund, the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno; executives and staff members of the several land reform agencies; colleagues in the Italian universities; and members of the Foreign Service and the Information Agency of the United States all gave generously of their time and counsel.

It is impossible to list all those who have helped me during the years this study was in the making. I would, in this short space, only single out those whose knowledge of the problems discussed here, and whose continuing advice and assistance, was of exceptional value; my colleagues, Professors Francesco Compagna, Ferdinando Milone, Manlio Rossi Doria, and Alberto Spreafico; Eric B. Shearer and Robert Tetro, of the Foreign Service of the United States; and Alberto Majnoni, of the Committee for the South of the Italian Council of Ministers. My heartfelt thanks go to them for the many favors they have shown me over the years. A special tribute must also be paid here to the memory of my distinguished fellow-geographer, Professor Roberto Almagià, who first introduced me to Southern Italy, to its charm and to its problems.

Throughout the years of field work, and preparation of this study, my wife was with me; her love and knowledge of the land, her good judgment, and her constant support are reflected throughout its pages.

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CHAPTER I

LAND REFORM AND RECLAMATION IN ITALY:

The Historical Background

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"Of all the pursuits that may produce profit, none is better than farming, none sweeter, none more fruitful, none more worthy of free men."  
Cicero, De Officiis, I., 42, 151

I

For well over two thousand years, the land of Italy has been the home of husbandmen. The wide plains of the Pò valley in the north, the fertile coastal plains of the peninsula, the sheltered orchards of Sicily have produced bountiful harvests, while cattle and sheep wandered, following the seasons, from mountain meadow to low-lying plain. Farming and the many problems connected with it have always been a concern to Italians. Behind the manifold activities of the present land reform program lie twenty centuries of trial and error, the achievements and failures of earlier attempts to improve the lot of the Italian farmer.

There are few plains in Italy; it is a mountainous country. Rainfall, except in the north, is limited in amount and highly seasonal in its distribution. There is either overabundance of rain when devastating floods scour the valleys, destroying crops and spreading mud over the fields, or long periods of drought when the crops will wither and die. The soils are poor over large areas and in need of fertilizers. The gradual cutting of most of Italy's forests over the centuries resulted in

soil erosion. In the lowlands, repeated floods created marshes and bogs, a favorite habitat of the malaria-bearing mosquito.

It is true that in a few favored regions the soil of Italy has been good to the men who tilled it. The words of Virgil about Italy, "Hail thee, land of Saturn, great mother of the earth's fruits!" could well apply to these fertile lands, since Virgil himself was a native of the of the rich bottomlands of the Pò valley. But elsewhere the Italian farmer, more often than not, has had to wrestle a living from the soil. Thus reclamation, the process of adding to Italy's farmland by drainage, by irrigation, by soil conservation, has played a role in Italian agricultural history since the days of the Roman republic.

Another recurring theme in the history of the land of Italy has been the preoccupation with the problems of land ownership. Rather early in the history of the Roman republic there were formed land holdings that, in comparison with the small farms of the Roman yeoman, must indeed have loomed large. The laws of the Roman republic have time and again set maximum limits to land ownership, and Roman writers have deplored the rise of large landed estates and the parallel decline of the small farm. Pliny's words, "Latifundia Italiam perdidere..."<sup>1</sup>, that the large estates have been the ruin of Italy, offer much too simple an explanation for the slow decline of Italian farming during the latter years of the Roman republic. Nonetheless,

the effectiveness of the slogan never diminished, and only in the current land reform laws can we find any recognition of the fact that size alone is not a criterion of evil, and that it is the use of the land, combined with the size of the holding, that must guide any efforts for lasting improvement of Italian farming.

The history of concerted efforts at land reclamation in Italy starts with the Etruscans, a people of mysterious origin who ruled the greater part of Central Italy at the height of their power, and whose domain extended northwards to the lowlands of the Pò River, to present day Emilia. There is considerable evidence that the Etruscans practiced flood control over the tributary streams that drain to it from the south, and cultivated the land thus reclaimed. There is also evidence to support the claim that the Etruscans built dikes and dug drainage canals along the coast of Tuscany, in the district called the Maremma.<sup>2</sup>

As Rome's power waxed and Etruscan power waned, and as the writ of Rome gradually extended over all of Italy, the Romans too became involved with land reclamation in many areas. Evidence found in the writings of Roman historians, and supported by archaeological finds, shows that Roman engineers diked streams and drained floodplains in districts both near Rome and in the far corners of Italy.

Lake Nemi, high in the Alban Hills on the southeastern edge of the plain of Rome, may well have been the site of one of the earliest drainage projects carried out by Roman skill.

A tunnel, drilled through volcanic rock, drained part of the lake's waters westward; to a valley leading to the nearby sea-coast; and the land thus drained was turned over to farming.

A more spectacular project, similar in nature, was that completed by the emperor Claudius in 52 A.D., draining the waters that occupied the Fucino basin, in the Appenines some sixty miles east of Rome. Roman engineers built a tunnel, 3.5 miles long, through the southern ramparts of the hills surrounding the basin, and drained part of the waters of the lake occupying the bottom of the basin to the nearby Liri River. This tunnel, cleaned and somewhat enlarged under the emperors Trajan and Hadrian, late in the 1st century A.D., made settlement in the Fucino basin possible, and introduced a time of prosperous farming that lasted until the 6th century.<sup>3</sup> Failure to keep secondary drainage canals clean; and the slow silting of the main tunnel; eventually resulted in the basin's being once more submerged by waters. It was not until the late 19th century that reclamation of the Fucino basin was completed.

Within a short distance of the city of Rome, there existed since the times of the early Roman republic, an area of marsh and bog, called the "Pontine District" by the Romans, and known as the "Pontine Marshes" in later times. Covering some 300 square miles, the district is bounded by low mountains in the north and east; by the seashore in the west and south. There is some doubt as to any permanent occupancy of the district in early Roman times, but the Roman historian Livy wrote that in 383 B.C., Rome, having extended its sway over the lands to the south of the city,

decided to parcel out the land of the marshes. A board of five commissioners, "Quinqueviri Pomptino Agro dividendo", was appointed in that year, but an outbreak of "pestilence", probably malaria, interrupted the undertaking. Livy has nothing to say about the settlement being resumed at a later time.<sup>4</sup>

There is evidence that in 160 B.C. a first serious attempt was made to drain the Pontine Marshes, thus preparing the land for settlement. A canal was dug by Roman engineers, running parallel to the famous Appian Way, the first of the great Roman roads that was built across the center of the district some time earlier. The canal does not seem to have accomplished much; for a century later the waters of the marsh rose so high that the Appian Way became impassable. Julius Caesar, virtual ruler of Rome at the time, decided to drain and reclaim the marshes through an audacious project. His plan was to divert the Tiber from its original course, and direct the flow of the river to the marshy area. A canal was to be built from Ostia, near the Tiber's mouth, to Terracina, at the southeastern end of the Pontine Marshes, in order to accomplish two things: reclamation of the district, and creation of a new seaport for Rome at the mouth of the canal. Caesar's death put an end to the project before it was even begun.

It is likely that the emperor Trajan, early in the second century A.D., while restoring the Appian Way, may also have ordered a cleaning of the original drainage canal. Later, in the 6th century, one Cecilius Decius submitted a plan to the great Goth king, Theodoric, to reclaim the marshy area; asking

for part of the reclaimed land for himself and his heirs in perpetuity. Nothing further was done, however, and the task was once more postponed, not to be completed until the 20th century.<sup>5</sup>

Roman concern with land reclamation was equalled by Roman preoccupation with the problem of land ownership. From the beginnings of Rome's expansion, that was to make the small city-state on the banks of the lower Tiber the ruler of all Italy, and later of the whole Mediterranean, colonization was frequently employed as a means of satisfying the land hunger of Rome's people.

When the Etruscan city-state of Veii, lying across the Tiber from Rome, was conquered in 396 B.C., the lands of Veii were assigned in small lots to Roman citizens. Indirect evidence suggests that even after all their demands were met, a substantial acreage of the newly conquered lands remained unassigned.<sup>6</sup> This was the origin of Rome's public lands, the ager publicus, that was to play such an important part in later agrarian reform laws. Such public lands were rented, the rent, vectigal, to be paid to the state. There were no laws, however, that prevented men of means to accumulate large amounts of public lands in their hands, and within a relatively short time the distinction between privately owned and state-leased land became so unimportant that Roman documents speak of ager privatus vectigalisque, land<sup>7</sup> privately held and also subject to rent paid to the state.

It is now generally believed that as early as the 4th century B.C. the laws of Rome sought to limit the amount of

public land held by any one person, imposing a maximum of 500 iugera, i.e. 300 acres. Similarly, there was a restriction imposed upon the number of animals which any one person might run on the public pastures. "But the former restriction had soon become a dead letter, and the public pasture had been taken up by private occupance."<sup>8</sup> By the time the long and costly wars between Carthage and Rome ended with Rome's victory, in the middle of the 2nd century B.C., large estates, made up of both private land and of public land held in violation of existing statutes, had become a widespread phenomenon across most of Central and Southern Italy.

The wars with Carthage constituted a drain on Roman manpower. Much of the countryside of Central and Southern Italy was devastated by the wars, and a growing number of small farmers gave up their land and went to the city of Rome in search of a better life. Competition with the large estates was becoming increasingly difficult for small-holders, and the cheap and abundant manpower provided by slaves, too, worked to the advantage of the latifundia, the great holdings. There was a growing mass of unemployed, landless Roman citizens and an increasing pressure for land. This was the background against which the agrarian law of 133 B.C., the lex Sempronia, was enacted.

It is possible to envisage the purpose of the Sempronian law and of its proponent, Tiberius Gracchus, as the desire to find a livelihood for the growing mass of Rome's unemployed. If it was successful, the number of substantial citizens would be increased and Italy would also lose some fraction of its

slave population, which by now was becoming a pressing danger. The Sempronian law sought to restore the old limit of 500 iugera, 300 acres, of public land to be held by any one owner. There was a provision, however, allowing a maximum of 1000 iugera, 600 acres, to be held in the possession of one family. Land in excess of these amounts was to be returned to the direct control of the state. The land thus made available was to have been parcelled out in small amounts of from three to five acres to citizens of Rome and also to citizens of Rome's allies.

In order to prevent land speculation to take advantage of the law, it was enacted that "the holdings awarded under the Sempronian law, though capable of passing by inheritance, should not be alienable by transfer for a consideration" <sup>9</sup> a measure foreshadowing one of the keystone provisions of the Italian land reform law of 1950. There is also evidence to suggest that Gracchus, in order to reinforce the state's role as the source of these land grants, insisted that the new holders should pay rent to the state. When the law was first presented, Gracchus also offered compensation to owners who had improved public lands during their tenancy, when they were compelled to return excess <sup>10</sup> acreage to the state.

To administer the law of 133 B.C., a board of three commissioners, the tresviri, were formed. They were "equipped with power to give judgements of legal validity in cases where the state's claim to the ownership of the land was in dispute" <sup>11</sup>; a provision foreshadowing modern claim practices where the state is a party to the dispute.

When presented by Tiberius Gracchus, the Sempronian law encountered considerable opposition. "In spite of the rather generous treatment accorded to the great proprietors...it met with determined opposition among the senatorial aristocracy. This was not because the Senate did not recognize that the land question constituted a serious problem, but because a majority of its members had already decided against any alteration in the existing situation. ...Ever since the tribunate of Gaius Flaminius in the third century (B.C.), the conservative element looked upon the division of public land as associated with demagoguery and mob rule."<sup>12</sup> With some rather minor changes, the attitude thus described resembles very closely the reception given by Italy's conservative parties to the first post-war land reform bill in 1949.

Gracchus' proposed law was ultimately adopted, though the opposition it generated in Roman politics cost the law's proponent his life. That it soon became good politics to adhere to the principles of the law is illustrated by an inscription ascribed to one of Gracchus' bitter foes, the consul Popilius. On a milestone, found in Lucania, in south Italy, this inscription states: "I first compelled the grazers to give back public land to the tillers."<sup>13</sup> But enactment of the law was sabotaged by the Senate's refusal, at least in the early days after the law's enactment, to make public funds available as "grubstakes" for the new owners. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Gracchus proposed to use the large sums bequeathed by King Attalus III of Pergamum, in Asia Minor, to the people of

Rome, to ensure the carrying out of the reform. It may well be that this threat compelled the Senate to act; at any rate it is known that the board of commissioners was in office, implementing the agrarian reform law, from 130 to 122 B.C.<sup>14</sup>

After 121 B.C. some of the law's provisions were modified. The grants made to small holders could be sold, since it was logical that the new assignees who could not pay rent should be allowed to dispose of their property. In 119 B.C. the board of commissioners was abolished, and men holding large parcels of public lands were guaranteed perpetual tenancy, in return for rent to be paid to the state. Finally, in 111 B.C., all public land assigned by the board of commissioners became the owners' private property and rent to the state was abolished. Colonies of Rome and allied cities were to be tenants in perpetuity, and all remaining public land was either to be rented<sup>15</sup> or become open to everyone, as "common", ager compascuus.

The great landed estates, the latifundia, continued to concern Rome through the remaining years of the Republic and those of the Empire. Time and again dictators like Marius and Caesar, and emperors like Trajan attempted to create small holdings, to build up a strong class of yeomen farmers, to revive the ideals of ancient Rome. The laws creating small farms were explicit in their intent to preserve these intact; Caesar's law of 59 B.C., for example, prohibited the sale of allotted land for twenty<sup>16</sup> years after the new owner took possession. But these provisions, aiming to defend the smallholder from the encroachment of land speculation, do not appear to have been successful.

Some new farms failed because the environment of the district was new to the smallholder, and he could not adjust himself to a different climate, different soil, different crops. Others could not compete with the superior organization of the large estates, nor did they have sufficient capital to cultivate crops that would assure better financial returns and security for the owner. There is widespread evidence that many new farmers sold out, while others gave up their rights of ownership and became tenants. In the latter years of the Roman empire, the yeoman farmer became the exception rather than the rule in Italy.

The decline of the Roman Empire, with the accompanying neglect in the upkeep of drainage and irrigation works, served only to intensify the need for land reclamation during the Middle-Ages. The monastic orders of western Christendom, beginning with the Benedictines, devoted much of their energy to the teaching of sound and productive husbandry, and the plowing of uncultivated land was one of the major tasks of many a monastery. In the waterlogged plain south of the Po delta, there stands to this day the abandoned church and buildings of the Benedictine abbey of Pomposa, where the monks attempted to drain the land and raise crops well over ten centuries ago. Similar tasks on isolated pieces of land were performed elsewhere in Italy by clerics and laymen alike, but it was in Venice that the energies of the state were first harnessed for concerted reclamation work.

The Venetian Republic, situated in the midst of a lagoon fed by rivers traversing the north Italian plain, depended upon the lagoon as its primary defense. Were the lagoon to fill up with alluvial material from its feeder streams, were the wide reaches of water to be invaded by marshy vegetation, Venice could no longer rely on its natural fortifications. The magistrates charged with the maintenance of the canals, Officiales Supra Canales, and the magistrates overseers of the swamps, Officiales Paludum, were charged with watching the waters of the lagoon, keeping navigation channels open and ensuring its proper drainage and defense against marsh and swamp.<sup>1</sup>

The Water Board of Venice, Magistrato alle Acque, carried out extensive public works on the lower reaches of the Piave, Brenta and Adige rivers as early as the fifteenth century, regulating their beds with dikes. It was the Water Board that, in 1604, cut across the Pò delta at Portoviro and changed the general course of the river southward, thus protecting lands under Venetian rule that lay to the north of the river. But Venice went beyond measures of flood control and river regulation. In 1556 the Republic created a Board of Magistrates in Charge of Wastelands, Provveditori Sopra di Luoghi Inculti. Their task was to reclaim marsh and swamp along the edge of the lagoon of Venice and on the Republic's possessions on the mainland of Italy. After reclamation, Venetian law provided for rent of such lands to "reclamation districts", compulsory associations of local landowners, who then were assessed, in addition to rent paid to the state, a special "reclamation tax" called campatico.<sup>2</sup>

Tuscany, in Central Italy, was the scene of major reclamation efforts during the 18th century. The valley of the Chiana River, partly drained in Roman times, had become a marshy, waterlogged area. In the last quarter of the 18th century, waters of the Chiana were diked, and diverted from their original course, and the bottomlands of the Chiana valley became the fertile farmlands they are today. Another reclamation project was undertaken in the coastal area of Tuscany, in the district of Grosseto, where engineers built drainage canals and succeeded in regulating the course of the Ombrone River. In this manner, part of the Maremma region around the city of Grosseto was reclaimed, although much of the rest of the Maremma remained untouched until the present-day land reform program.

In the Papal States, reclamation was a major concern of several of the popes, beginning with Pius IV in the 15th century. The Pontine Marshes, lying at the doorstep of Rome, became one of the areas where the popes attempted on more than one occasion to tame the waters and render the district fit for cultivation. Leonardo da Vinci was hired by Pope Leo X, in the early years of the 16th century, to draw up a plan for the draining of the marshes. His plan, like others before, was never carried out, and the same fate befell schemes elaborated for the papal government by some of Europe's best hydraulic engineers of the 17th and early 18th century.

In 1777 Pope Pius VI called in a group of drainage specialists, this time from the northern portions of the

Papal States, the Romagna. Their plan was put into effect, and under the direction of Gaetano Rappini, the best engineer of his time, a large drainage canal was built. It followed the longer dimension of the Pontine Marshes, and parallel to it a new Appian Way was built, sparing the travellers the laborious hillside route that the famous old highway had to follow for centuries, in order to avoid the watery plain. But little else was accomplished beyond the building of the canal, still known as Pope Pius' canal, or Linea Pia, and there were no lasting land reclamation benefits from the project.<sup>3</sup>

In the lower Pò valley, the Romagna region, which was part of the Papal States until the unification of Italy, flood control and drainage works became an important concern of the papal government in the late 16th century. The Duchy of Ferrara, consisting entirely of land that was at the mercy of the Pò, passed into the hands of the Holy See at that time, and a special Board of Water Control, the "Sacred Congregation of the Waters", was created by the Vatican. In 1604, under Pope Clement VIII, a "General Reclamation Plan" for the land along the lower Pò was elaborated. It was perhaps too ambitious an undertaking for the techniques known at the time, but the plan was the first step among many to reclaim the lower Pò plain.<sup>4</sup>

The "Sacred Congregation of the Waters" developed plans for the regulation of the Pò and of its right-hand tributaries, the swift, torrential streams that descend towards the Pò from

the Appenines. These streams and the river Reno, which drains directly into the Adriatic Sea north of Ravenna, periodically flood the lowlands of the Romagna, damaging existing farms, and the work begun by the papal engineers was the first serious attempt to control them. Other reclamation and irrigation projects, on a lesser scale, were carried out by many of the Italian city states in the north and by the government of the Kingdom of Sicily in the south.

With the creation of the united kingdom of Italy, in 1861, reclamation of swamps and marshes and irrigation of farmlands became a national rather than a local concern. The first survey of the problem was made by Raffaele Pareto, entitled "On Land Reclamation, Ricefields and Irrigation in the Kingdom of Italy", in 1865.<sup>5</sup> Recognition of the fact that the state had to bear at least part of the costs of reclamation projects of public interest was embodied in the Baccarini Law of 1882, the first specific statute dealing with reclamation problems.

Under the Baccarini Law, all reclamation projects were divided into two categories. Projects concerned with public health, such as the drainage of malarial swamps, were to be carried out under the direction of the state, the state providing half of the project costs, the other half being charged to landowners and to public bodies in the area. All other reclamation projects were to be carried out by the owners, organized in reclamation districts, consorzi, who were entitled to receive support from the government amounting to one tenth of the project costs.

Following enactment of the Baccarini Law on reclamation, numerous other legislative steps were taken during the latter years of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th, concerning the problems of reclamation. There were laws, passed by the Italian parliament, dealing with reforestation, with malaria control, with stream regulation and flood control, with the supply of drinking water for the rural population. Gino Valenti, one of Italy's outstanding agricultural economists at the time, commented on the discrepancy between parliamentary action and actual accomplishment in agricultural matters in these words, writing in 1911: "We Italians still have to learn that to solve certain major problems it is not enough to pass a law; it is necessary to dispose of adequate sums to implement the law and to have men who are capable to administer it".<sup>6</sup>

During the years preceding the first World War, reclamation did take considerable strides in Italy. Malaria was being brought under control; at least in the north of the country, population and livestock increased, and so did the value of farm output.<sup>7</sup> But population pressure on the limited area of Italy was not lightened by the scattered reclamation measures. The first years of the 20th century saw the gradual rise of farm workers' unions, and strikes for higher wages and better conditions for agricultural labor.

During World War I, and especially after Italian forces suffered several major defeats in 1917, glowing promises were made to the peasants who were fighting in the ranks of the

Italian army. Italy's wartime Prime Minister, Salandra, said that "Italy will give land and everything that goes with it to the peasants, so that every hero who has fought bravely in the trenches can become economically independent", a statement that was printed and distributed to soldiers along the fighting front.<sup>8</sup> That these words fell on a fertile ground is illustrated by the wave of farm strikes that took place in Italy in the period immediately following the war. The great majority of these strikes were successful and resulted in substantial concessions to farm labor. There was a parallel improvement in tenancy contracts, and measures were taken by the government to protect tenants and 'freeze' land rents.

1919 and 1920 were turbulent years in Italy. The immediate post-war elections brought a substantial number of deputies belonging to radical political parties into the Italian parliament, and the landless peasants felt that they had at long last sympathetic friends in government and in parliament. During this period there were numerous cases of peasants invading large landed estates and "squatting" on the land, subsequently establishing peasant cooperatives. Parliament reacted favorably and passed a law, the Visocchi Law of September 2, 1919, authorizing the prefects of the several provinces "to requisition uncultivated or insufficiently cultivated land and to cede it for four years to responsible cooperatives. At the end of the four year period the final disposition of the land was to be determined by

provincial commissions under a stipulated procedure. If the land was permanently transferred to a cooperative, indemnities to the former proprietors were to be fixed by arbitration committees.<sup>9</sup>

A second measure, the Falcioni Law of April 22, 1920, stated that "the cooperatives must have financial and technical 'competence'; if a cooperative failed to cultivate the land or pay for its use, the grant was to be rescinded; further arbitrary invasions were to be treated as acts of usurpation, punishable by fines and imprisonment."<sup>10</sup> The final and logical step in this slow progress towards land reform legislation was taken when, on August 10, 1922, the Italian Chamber of Deputies passed a bill "that would have provided for expropriation of poorly cultivated latifondi (large landed estates), subject to the payment of compensation to the owners, and for final transference to small peasant cultivators."<sup>11</sup>

The principles underlying parliamentary action during the 1919-1922 period were greatly at variance with land reform legislation then, or shortly afterwards, by other European parliaments, notably in Eastern and Central Europe. Whereas the measures enacted in Romania, in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary were either 'mechanical' in concept, based uniquely on the size of the property, or confiscatory in nature, applying to the holdings of absentee owners who had residence abroad, the Italian legislation was more discriminating. It maintained that the land reform must be

based not only on the size of the holding, but also on the way in which the land was used, and this was to become the guiding principle of the legislation passed in 1950, and now in effect.

The measures passed by the Italian parliament during the years immediately following the First World War sought to satisfy the demands of a land-hungry peasantry by the promise of a more equitable distribution of land. But the political climate of the country changed radically by 1922. The rapid rise of political parties dedicated to social change, and the parallel rise of a strong labor movement, threatened to change the very fabric of Italian society. The reaction to this threat was Fascism.

Fascism, in its earlier years at any rate, was dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo in Italian politics, in the economy of the country. There was no room in a Fascist-controlled society for such radical changes as the breaking-up of large landed estates, or the establishment of peasant cooperatives.

During the first year in power, the Fascist government, under Benito Mussolini, repealed the Visocchi and Falcioni laws, stopped parliamentary action on a bill proposing the division of poorly managed large estates into small peasant farms, and revoked earlier measures protecting tenants. If there were changes to be made in the use of Italy's farmlands, they were to be made according to the new, Fascist, gospel.

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CHAPTER II

LAND REFORM AND RECLAMATION IN ITALY:

The Fascist Experiment, 1926-1939

## II

In a speech delivered at the close of Fascism's fourth year, in October, 1926, Mussolini sounded the call for action: "It is our task to transform, ...beyond recognition the physical and spiritual face of the country." Fascism, inheriting from the parliamentary governments that preceded it the basic problem of Italian agriculture, too many people on too little land, was about to propose its own solutions.

Two ideas dominated Fascist action in agricultural matters: self-sufficiency in the country's food supply, especially bread, and settlement of landless farm laborers on reclaimed land. The first of these, symbolized by the Fascist slogan, "battle for grain", scarcely contributed to the lasting improvement of Italian farming conditions, for it only overemphasized the Italian farmer's tendency to shy away from new crops and concentrate his efforts on growing wheat. The second, the policy of reclamation and settlement, was based on a curious mixture of high professional competence and the desire for quick success to be advertised for the benefit of the regime. The most successful Fascist ventures in this latter field were spectacular in the manner in which they were achieved and the speed with which they were carried out. But the principal contribution of the Fascist years was less spectacular and more lasting. It was the creation of pilot projects, the slow development of new concepts and techniques, and the training of technicians that was to have a profound influence on the

land reform of the 1950's.

Beginning in 1925, the Fascist government established special public works boards, provveditorati alle opere<sup>1</sup> pubbliche, that were to be in charge of reclamation works. The law of December 24, 1928, known during the inter-war years as the "Mussolini Law ", established a fourteen-year program of reclamation works, with a proposed total expenditure of seven billion lire (\$350 million at the 1935 exchange rate). Under the 1928 plan, this sum, large for the time, was to be spent for drainage, irrigation, aqueducts, new villages, new farm buildings, and country roads. The bulk of the sum was to be spent in southern Italy, and the<sup>2</sup> plan called for completion of the program by 1944.

To implement the general reclamation program of 1928, a decree, dated February 13, 1933, was issued, defining in considerable detail administrative procedures.<sup>3</sup> Reclamation districts, consorzi di bonifica, were to be organized, either voluntarily or by government decree, comprising all landowners of the area to be reclaimed, and the decisions of the districts were to be binding. Certain of these districts were to undertake reclamation works on land hitherto unused, to make it ready for settlement. Others were to engage in land improvement works to protect land already in agricultural use and to increase its productivity. The state was to provide a share of the necessary expenditures, running from a high figure of 75 to 90% for works of public interest, roads, canals, bridges, to as low as 33% for shelter belts of trees or irrigation systems for established farms.

The law provided that if a landowner failed to carry out the task assigned to him by the reclamation district, the land in question could be expropriated, with due compensation to be paid, based upon the unimproved value of the land.<sup>4</sup> Actually this provision was seldom invoked, and the total acreage thus expropriated was less than 70,000 hectares (145,000 acres).<sup>5</sup>

Sample plans for reclamation districts were worked out during the Fascist period. One of these plans, for the lower Volturno River reclamation district, located in the coastland of the south Italian region of Campania, north of Naples, illustrates the desires of Fascist land policy, and the aims it set out to achieve. The plan, designed for a six-year period, called for the creation of farm units not exceeding 30 hectares (75 acres) in area, but permitting, in exceptional cases, farms as large as 100 hectares (250 acres). Each farm had to support a minimum number of workers, the number to be calculated as "working units" per hectare; each farmstead was to carry a minimum number of livestock, again defined per unit area, 0.3 metric tons of live weight per hectare. The plan stated explicitly that in order to ensure intensive land use, open grazing land was to be eliminated, and all animals had to be stabled by the end of the six-year period foreseen for the plan's completion. Complete drainage, to eliminate malaria, was to be the rule, and shelter belts of trees along roads and property lines were to be planted.<sup>6</sup> The actual achievements of the plan in the lower Volturno district fell far short of these ambitious goals, but the concepts defined in this and

other plans were yardsticks, to be applied, twenty years later, to the Volturno valley and to other areas where the present land reform is in progress.

The majority of the reclamation and settlement projects of the Fascist period were carried out by a para-statal agency, the National Foundation for War Veterans. A small number were administered directly by the reclamation districts themselves, and there were a few projects carried out by private individuals.

The Italian National Foundation for War Veterans, the Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti, was created during the First World War, "to provide economic, financial, technical, and moral assistance to all surviving veterans".<sup>7</sup> The law of June 16, 1927 spells out the purposes of the Foundation and defines its structure, policies and practices. In the words of that law, "the primary purpose of the Foundation is to promote the economic development and better social adjustment of the country, principally by providing for land reclamation and for the increase of small and medium-sized holdings, to increase production and to encourage the permanent residence on the land of a denser agricultural population".<sup>8</sup>

The Foundation's activities as a reclamation and settlement agency were most intensive during the 1930's. World War II brought it to a virtual standstill, but after 1949 the Foundation became once more an important if lesser, agency for the land reform program. Between 1919, the beginning of its work, and 1956, the Foundation completed reclamation work over an area of nearly 200,000 hectares, or half a million acres.

It created over five thousand new farms, built houses for that many farm families, and established over thirty new settlement centers.<sup>9</sup> What is even more important, the National Foundation for War Veterans became during the Fascist era the principal sponsor for pilot projects and the champion of a number of new concepts and techniques that were to be employed, over a much larger area, by the land reform program begun in 1950.

Two ideas in particular, that dominated the policy of the Foundation, became a vital part of the post-1950 Italian land reform. The first of these, foreshadowed by the events of 1919 to 1922, is the recognition of the fact that newly created small holdings should be on land that has been reclaimed from swamp or marsh for this specific purpose, or on land that had been left unused, or used only extensively, such as unimproved pasture. Seen against the background of Italian agriculture, severely limited by climate, soils, and relief, this policy avoids interference with well-established, intensively operated holdings regardless of their size, avoids the danger of production setbacks caused by breaking up farms that follow an intensive form of land utilization, and concentrates instead on adding new acreage to the nation's cropland.

In implementing this principle, the Foundation's first step in its settlement policy was actual reclamation: drainage, deep plowing when necessary, the building of access roads, the provision of drinking water and of irrigation systems for the new farms to be established. In this manner, a substantial

number of man-hours were employed in what might be called the first phase of the settlement program, in a major public works enterprise that provided, temporarily at least, employment for the unemployed or partially employed men of the area surrounding the reclamation project.

Once the primary phase was completed, and the physical foundation for the new farmsteads was provided, the Foundation's policy was largely influenced by a second idea, a corollary of the first: that new farmsteads created on reclaimed land should have houses built on the farm. Central and southern Italy, like most of the Mediterranean world, is a country of highly nucleated settlements, of villages and towns. In that traditional pattern of settlement, the farmer spends a great deal of his time and energy "commuting" between his home and his land. The Foundation's policy was to break with this age-old tradition and to create a dispersed pattern of settlement, by building the new houses on the farm. (figs. 1. and 2.)

Bringing the farmer to live on the land, taking him and his family out of the established ways of doing things, created a whole host of new problems. There was clearly a need for some kind of center where the men could meet on an evening, where women could shop and talk, where children could go to school, where there would be medical care, and where people could worship on Sunday. Thus the rural service center, the borgata rurale, came into existence. It had to fulfill the social, commercial, educational, medical, and religious

functions traditionally carried out by the village or small town. In addition to these, the service center also provided housing for the technicians who supervised continuing reclamation work and acted as advisors to the newly established farmers. Ten such centers were created by using tiny hamlets already in existence in a previously largely unpopulated district, nineteen others were built entirely by the Foundation prior to 1939. Four other centers were large enough to become townships, comuni, and one reached the rank of city and provincial capital.<sup>10</sup>

The essential features of these centers were a general store, a café, a school, a medical dispensary, and a church. Out of these few elements the more elaborate centers grew, which came to have retail trade, industry, and service functions as well. They were the prototypes, the models for the service centers established during the 1950's by the current land reform program. (fig. 3)

The technicians of the Foundation were faced with a wide variety of environmental conditions in their task of reclaiming and resettling the land of Italy. The Foundation's projects ranged throughout the width and breadth of Italy, from the Alps to Sicily and Sardinia. Thus another essential function was carried out by the Foundation, the training of specialists for the tasks of reclamation and settlement. The projects were for the most part small, involving a limited area, but provided practical experience in soil conservation, drainage, irrigation, animal husbandry and a whole



Figure 1. ONC (National Foundation for Veterans) farm, lower Volturno valley (Campania).



Figure 2. ONC farm, Foggia plain (Puglia).



Figure 3. Borgo San Michele: church and post office; Pontine area.

range of new agricultural techniques. In this manner the National Foundation for War Veterans fulfilled a vital role, preparing the cadres for future work in agrarian reform.

The outstanding accomplishment of the Foundation during the interwar years was the Pontine District, or Agro Pontino, project. Long a desolate, empty, malarial zone of marsh and poor pasture, the Pontine District had challenged emperors and popes who had attempted vainly to transform its useless acres of wilderness into farmland (see p. 4). The fact that this area was within less than fifty miles' distance from Rome had probably a great deal to do with the Fascist regime's decision to make it the showplace of its reclamation policy.

In retrospect, it seems as if Fascism had staked its reputation on the success of the Pontine project. World War I explosives were used in large quantities to tear up the marshy, waterlogged soil and destroy the original, deep-rooted vegetation. An elaborate drainage system channeled the waters of the area to the sea. Subsidiary canals were built to keep the water table down and to provide irrigation water during the summer. A small army of laborers was employed building the canals, constructing access roads, laying out the pattern of fields. After the farms were surveyed, a house was built on each homestead, the number of housetypes being reduced to a minimum, to speed up building. Service centers were constructed to serve the needs of the newly created farms, to provide schools, churches, stores, dispensaries. In five years, between 1930 and 1935, the face of the district changed

completely. Except for a few isolated areas of woodlands, and shoreline, the Pontine Marshes became the "Pontine Fields".

During World War II the Allied advance towards Rome passed through the Pontine Fields and the damage was heavy. But the canals and the pumping stations were repaired, the houses replastered after the war, the fields were put back into production, and the service centers, the small towns and Latina, the provincial capital of the district, are now more prosperous than ever. The project was successful, the Pontine Fields are a show piece of modern reclamation and settlement.

The Pontine project was to be a pilot project for Fascist settlement policy. It turned out to be a pilot project for many aspects and techniques of the land reform of the 1950's. The general sequence of work, from deep ploughing through drainage and road building to actual settlement of farmers on the land; the lay-out and functions of the service centers; the tentative steps taken to introduce new crops and new skills to the farmers; all of these have been adapted, with some changes, by the current land reform program. But in one important respect the Fascist policy differed from that of the post-World War II period: the vast majority of the farmers settled on the newly reclaimed acres on the Pontine district came from northern Italy, from the Veneto region, rather than from the district itself. The argument supporting this choice was that these men had farmed land where the water table was close to the surface, as it was

in the Pontine district; that they were familiar with drainage and irrigation techniques; that they could be expected to make a success of the project. The people of the area surrounding the Pontine district were employed only in the early phases of the project, on the various public works enterprises, but they did not benefit permanently. Land was not assigned to them, it was held for the newcomers from the North.

The decision to "import" settlers for the newly reclaimed farms may have been motivated by their superior skill in coping with the area's problems, but it may also have been dictated simply by the desire to reward faithful followers of the Fascist regime. It was a decision possible within the limited framework of the project, a pilot enterprise. But in the post-World War II era, when pressures on the government were nation-wide, such a choice was no longer possible. The present land reform program's two objectives, increasing Italian farm production by bringing hitherto unused or unusable land under the plough, and improving the lot of the landless farm laborer by assigning him a farm created on land made available by the program, preclude the "importing" of settlers for the new farms. The law places social and political advantages above the technical ones: farmers from other parts of Italy may well be more skilled than the local residents, but the program's benefits are to be for the area where the project is carried out, and for that area alone.

In two other districts besides the Pontine Fields the pioneer work of the National Foundation for War Veterans was the first serious attempt to transform long neglected and abused lands. The first of these is the lower Volturno River valley, the second the great, rolling lowland on the southeast coast of the Italian peninsula, the Foggia plain. In these areas the service centers created by the Foundation are still standing, though their buildings are of little use, and there is an air of ghost towns about several of them. Along the roads the trim, simple, efficiently designed houses the Foundation put up for its settlers withstood time successfully, and the Foundation's initials, "ONC", followed by the number of the farmstead, are still legible. The Foundation's projects are milestones along the road of reclamation and resettlement in Italy.

Two other features of the Foundation's work deserve brief mention, two activities that were trailblazers for the post-World War II reform program. First, it was the Foundation's policy to assign small plots of land, in most cases less than four acres, to farmers who already owned small holdings of their own. The purpose of these assignments, called quota, was to enlarge the small farmer's acreage to the point where he could be self-supporting on the income from his land. Although this feature was adopted by the current land reform program, its virtues were far from uniformly accepted, and its results are still very much in doubt.

Secondly, the Foundation's 1927 charter provided that special credits were to be made available to farmers' cooperatives formed by the newly installed smallholders. During the 1920's and 1930's there were a few such cooperatives in existence, and the principle was made an integral part of the land reform laws passed in 1950.

The outstanding example of a reclamation project started by private initiative, but completed with strong state support, is the Arborea project, on the west coast of the island of Sardinia. The agency in charge of the project was originally called the Ferrara Reclamation Society, a corporation created in 1919 to settle landless laborers from the lower Pò valley in sparsely populated Sardinia. Renamed soon after its formation "Sardinian Reclamation Agency", the corporation selected an area of swampland and marshy forest on the Gulf of Oristano, in western Sardinia, for its principal settlement project. After draining the area, malaria, endemic in much of Sardinia, was brought under control and 9000 hectares were made available for cultivation. Two hundred fifty five farmsteads were created in the 1930's, and all were settled originally by families from northern Italy.

Today, thirty years after its inception, the Arborea project stands like an oasis in the midst of the Campidano, the plain of western Sardinia. Whereas the area surrounding Arborea is an open and windswept plain, yellow with wheat during harvest, parched and brown much of the rest of the year, Arborea is a symphony of green. Long rows of eucalyptus

grown tall over the years, serve as windbreaks protecting the fields from the dangerous westerly winds, and provide shade for houses and roads. Fields of wheat and corn, lush green meadows, orchards and vineyards, all of them irrigated, produce the best harvests in all of Sardinia. The Fascist regime spent freely at Arborea, and the results are commensurate with the expenditures: it is a showpiece of reclamation. Whether the sums spent there in terms of unit area could be duplicated over the hundreds of thousands of acres awaiting reclamation in Sardinia is questionable, but the results of drainage, irrigation, and afforestation employed<sup>13</sup> at Arborea show what can be achieved. (figs. 4, 5 and 6)

It would be misleading, however, to create the impression that all of the reclamation projects of the Fascist years were carried out by the government. Model farms were developed by landowners on the fertile plains of the Pò valley, and in some of the valleys of Tuscany. One of the most successful reclamation and rehabilitation projects undertaken by an individual stands at the very gates of Rome, in what until the 1920's were the barren hillsides and sandy coastal plains of the Maremma district. There an outstanding Italian newspaperman, Luigi Albertini, established the "Torre in Pietra" farm.

Albertini had been one of the editors of the Corriere della Sera, Italy's leading newspaper in the 1920's, but resigned because of his anti-Fascist views. He bought nearly 2,400 hectares of land in the Maremma, less than twenty miles



Figure 6. Homestead, Arborea (Sardinia).

from Rome, and through heavy investment made it into a model dairy farm, producing truck crops for the Rome market as well. When Albertini purchased his farm, there were fewer than thirty persons living on it, by the 1950's "Torre in Pietra" supported<sup>14</sup> over 1,400 people.

In the field of reclamation and settlement, Fascism tended to concentrate its efforts and invest its funds in a small number of projects that were likely to produce spectacular results and in this manner glorify the regime. Yet at the same time these pilot projects tested new techniques, developed new ideas, and above all, served as training grounds for the men who were to carry out the more ambitious programs of the 1950's.

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CHAPTER III

The Setting of the Land Reform Program: 1945-1950

## III

Italy's Fascist regime collapsed during the Second World War, but the costs of its defeat were borne by the Italian people. Much of Italy became a battlefield as the United Nations fought the Axis, and the fighting took a heavy toll of lives and property. Dwellings, and works of art suffered often irreparable damage; industrial plants, harbors, railroad equipment were destroyed. The economy as a whole was suffering from deep shock at the end of hostilities, in 1945.

Agriculture, too, bore its share of losses. Nearly 5% of the pre-war cultivated area was destroyed or severely damaged. Half a million acres of orchards, vineyards, olive and chestnut groves were wiped out, and so was nearly one quarter of the livestock. Thousands of miles of irrigation canals were choked by vegetation, due to neglected maintenance. It was estimated that by 1945 the productive capacity of Italian agriculture was reduced to sixty per cent of its pre-war level, and so was the per capita calorie supply of the population.<sup>1</sup>

More serious than these losses, which could be gradually repaired, were the changes in the land use pattern of the country. The total harvested area in Italy was reduced by 6.5% between 1937 and 1945, while fallow increased 62.5% during the same period. To remedy these

losses, it was necessary to increase the amount of seeds, of livestock, of fertilizers available to Italian farms, a task completed with help from both international emergency funds, such as the United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Administration, and from direct contributions made by the United States. By 1949-1950, the general level of Italy's farm output regained that of the pre-war years, rationing of foodstuffs was abolished, and the period of emergency measures came to an end.

But the task of rebuilding Italian agriculture was far from having been completed. There remained other problems: chronic unemployment and underemployment among agricultural workers, a striking imbalance between the several major economic regions of the country. And a profound change in the political, social, and economic climate of Italy made the solution of these problems imperative.

The Italian land reform of the 1950's has to be viewed not only against the background of wartime destruction and post-war reconstruction, but equally much against the political upheaval caused by the downfall of Fascism. When the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini fell from power in July, 1943, and the succeeding government appointed by Victor Emmanuel III sought and obtained an armistice, Italy's political life changed overnight. Instead of the monolithic façade of one-party government, maintained for over twenty years by Fascism, political parties of nearly every persuasion appeared. These parties ranged over nearly

the entire political spectrum, from the old-established, conservatives of the Right through the middle-of-the-road Christian Democrats to the Left Wing Socialists and the Communists. In the 1946 election of members to a constitutional convention, the Left Wing parties garnered over one third of the votes cast, establishing themselves as a major political force in Italy. Forced by the logic of their programs, the Left Wing parties espoused completely the cause of the underprivileged groups, especially of industrial and farm workers and small owner-operators, as the small Italian farmers are called.

The existing injustices in the social and economic structure of Italy, especially as far as land ownership was concerned, were clearly recognized by the men who wrote the Italian Constitution of 1948. In Article 44 of the Constitution, they gave a mandate to succeeding governments to change and improve the use and possession of the land of Italy: "For the purpose of securing a rational exploitation of the soil and of establishing just relationships, the law imposes obligations and restrictions on private property in land; it fixes limits to its extension according to region and agrarian zone; it promotes and requires reclamation, the transformation of latifundia, and the reconstitution of productive units; it aids the small and medium-scale proprietor. The law frames provisions in favor of the mountainous zones." Awareness of the land problem was not limited to the Left; but was shown by men of conservative views as well: in a

study dealing with the land reform article, it is pointed out that the mandatory clauses in this article, the "bill of rights" of Italian agriculture, were introduced by one of Italy's most respected statesmen, the late Luigi Einaudi, first President of the Italian Republic.

The most pressing need for changes in the use and ownership of the land existed in Southern Italy, a term used to describe the provinces of the Italian peninsula lying south of Rome, and the two major islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Virtually all of Southern Italy, except the island of Sardinia, was part of the Kingdom of Naples prior to the unification of the country in 1860-61. Throughout the century that lapsed since the armies of Garibaldi, sweeping like wildfire through the Italian South, abolished the government of the Bourbon kings of Naples and made Italy a single nation from the Alps to Sicily, Southern Italy lagged behind the rest of the country in every single respect. Prior to unification, the economy of the South, in the words of Giustino Fortunato, one of the leading students of the "southern problem", was a "primitive economy, in which the division of labor scarcely existed and trade was reduced to a minimum. Most people worked for their own subsistence rather than with a view of producing goods they could sell in order to buy what they needed out of the proceeds. In a great many communes considerably more than half the population never ate wheaten bread and the peasants lived working like beasts of burden, since the subsistence of each of them cost less than

the keep of a donkey', wrote Lodovico Bianchini, one of the King Ferdinand II's ministers".<sup>2</sup>

Unification meant that Southern Italy, protected by high tariffs while the Kingdom of Naples existed, was henceforth in competition with the more advanced central and northern sections of the country. Aggravating this burden was the fact that in economic matters it was the North, Piedmont and Lombardy, the most prosperous sections of the country, that set Italian policy. Southern agriculture was considered far less important than agriculture and industry in the North, and the economy of Southern Italy, through lack of investment, and lack of governmental interest and support, remained backward after Italian unity was established.

A statistical measure of this fact may be seen in a comparison of the position of the South in 1861 with the state of affairs in 1951. In 1861, the population of the South was 9.8 million; of these 57% were gainfully employed, leaving thus an unemployed population of 4.2 million. In 1951 the population of the South had increased to 17.4 million, but only 35% of these were gainfully employed, the unemployed portion representing 11 million people. Of the gross national product of 11,797 billion lire in 1953, 80% was represented by North and Central Italy, only 20% by the South, even though the South includes 37% of Italy's population.<sup>3</sup>

In a classic description of the former Neapolitan provinces, Leopoldo Franchetti, writing in 1875, refers to

their "almost savage agriculture", to "barely cultivated hills", to "uplands on which nothing but ferns grow, slopes largely deforested, coastal areas and...inland river valleys ...poisoned by infected air and badly cultivated or lying fallow". He speaks of "whole chains of hills, abandoned, carried away by the waters, by rivulets barely visible at the beginning" of "gullies ten meters deep and more", of soil "tortured, cut eroded, falling in everywhere", of torrential rivers "that carry away whole farms without anybody making the least attempt to protect them", rivers which at their mouths "cover endless extensions of pebbles and when they flow at a distance of a few kilometers from one another, mix their stones together forming little plains of stones and sand".<sup>4</sup>

The South Italian peasant, his livelihood menaced by lack of technical knowledge, by lack of investment capital, by erosion of the land, his health endangered by malnutrition and malaria, was driven to emigration. Some found a better life in other parts of Italy, more in other European countries, but most emigrants from Southern Italy went overseas, to the Americas. The numbers of these migrants, a trickle at first, swelled to a steady stream by the first decade of the twentieth century. The result of this mass migration was stagnation: demographic stagnation in a region where the combined toll of emigration and disease exceeded the natural rate of population growth; economic stagnation as a result of the flight of the most active and most

ambitious people; political stagnation as Italy continued to be dominated by the more prosperous, more advanced and more articulate North.

Southern Italy was, as late as the 1930's, one of the most backward parts of all Europe, not just a poor land, but a land without hope. Carlo Levi, in what is the classic contemporary portrait of the region, a book entitled, Christ Stopped at Eboli, described the Italian South in these words: "Christ never came this far, nor did time, nor the individual soul, nor hope, nor the relation of cause to effect, nor reason, nor history...None of the pioneers of Western civilization brought here his sense of the passage of time, his deification of the State...No one has come to this land except as an enemy, a conqueror, or a visitor devoid of understanding. The seasons pass today over the toil of the peasants, just as they did three thousand years before Christ; no message, human or divine, has reached this stubborn poverty ...to this shadowy land that knows neither sin nor redemption from sin, where evil is not moral but is only the pain residing forever in earthly things, Christ did not come. Christ<sup>5</sup> stopped at Eboli."

Eboli is a village on the western shore of Italy, sixty-odd miles south of Naples. Beyond Eboli the main highway that leads from Naples to Sicily leaves the open lowland and within a few miles penetrates deep into the heart of the most desolate land in all Europe. Barely a decade ago, Levi's description of the state of mind of the peasant of South

Italy, of the natural and man-made circumstances that surround him from birth to death, had the ring of complete truth about it. The challenge of the South, a region weighted down by lack of hope, by lack of faith in any individual or any organization, private or public, was what made the land reform an inescapable measure of post-war Italian life.

The total area available for agricultural use of Italy in 1945 amounted to nearly 28 million hectares, 69 million acres, about the area of Colorado. Land available for cultivation, excluding permanent pasture, orchards, and woodlots, amounted to 16.8 million hectares. Of this area, 65% was held in farm units of less than 50 hectares (125 acres), 17.4% in holdings from 50 to 200 hectares (125 to 500 acres), and 17.6% in holdings of over 200 hectares (500 acres).<sup>6</sup> There was considerable variation in the geographic distribution of the small and large farms, with the great estates, the latifundia, being more characteristic of Central and Southern Italy than of the North. Equally important was the fact that a substantial portion of farmland was owned by absentee landlords, who did not cultivate the land themselves, but used tenants, share growers, or salaried workers. (fig.7)

But it would be misleading to consider the land problem of Southern Italy only in terms of the size of holdings. In a deeper sense, it was the use to which the land was put that was important. In small areas, located mostly along the sea-

coast, fruit trees, olive trees, citrus groves, vegetable gardens predominated, cultivated in small holdings by peasant owners. In this intensive type of land utilization, called "the tree-covered South" by Rossi-Doria, one of Italy's leading agricultural economists, crop rotations are long and complex and farm incomes highest in the entire South.<sup>7</sup>

In complete contrast to these small districts of specialized, intensive agriculture were the large expanses of coastal plain, plateau, and valley land, sown entirely in cereals, combined with extensive animal husbandry. On some of the more humid coastal plains where the streams carried water throughout the year, water buffalo grazed; their milk was used to make the popular mozzarella cheese, much in demand throughout central and southern Italy. (fig.8) Elsewhere sheep were pastured in large numbers, on the high pastures of the Appennines and on the hills in the summer (fig. 9), on the coastal lowlands in the winter. The ancient practice of transhumance, the seasonal migration of sheep from pasture to pasture, was still followed in many parts of the south. (fig. 10). It was this type of land use, the "naked South" in Rossi-Doria's terminology, that made change and reform inevitable. A primitive rotation scheme was the rule in these areas: one wheat crop every two years, or semi-fallow, wheat, and oats or barley on the three year rotation basis. Twenty to thirty per cent of the land may have been idle at any time in this scheme, a wasteful



Figure 7. Former country home of Baron Baracco, near Cutro; now used by land reform agency (Calabria).



Figure 8. Buffalo grazing, La Lupara ranch, lower Volturno valley (Campania).



Figure 9. Shepherd and his flock on the Murge plateau (Puglia).



Figure 10. Herd of sheep on the move, Vibo Valentia (Calabria).

method that could at best be described as a bare subsistence<sup>8</sup> economy.

If we define the latifundium, in terms of land use, as land where even minimal investment is lacking and productivity is low, cultivated by seasonal workers on large estates or by share growers in small strips, holding their tiny units on short-term contracts, empty of people, except for a few, scattered buildings used as sheep folds or for shelter during the height of the planting or harvest season, we must so define all the land that was held by absentee landlords, whether the total extent of their holdings was 500, 5,000, or 50,000 acres. The latifundium thus becomes a social-economic fact, not merely a large estate of so many acres. In a work dealing with the problems of reclamation of the Fascist period, the following definition of the latifundium is found: "Latifundium is a term which can in no wise be identified with the mere size of an estate or farm; in either case it is associated with the almost complete absence of all investments in the land and with the limited use of working capital; consequently, the land can only be used for extensive agriculture of the least productive description while sanitary and social conditions are deplorable. Latifundia are found in zones lacking public works; they are generally under poor and discontinuous cereal crops, and used as rough grasslands for grazing livestock for which no stabling is provided....Latifundia follow one after the other, bordering on each other, thus forming a compact mass,

untraversed by roads, with no water system, infested by malaria, with hardly any permanent inhabitants. They form a complex whole, the product of natural, historical, social and economic conditions." (fig.8)

Through wide-spread use of modern insecticides, malaria ceased to represent a serious public health problem throughout Southern Italy and the islands, by the 1950's. However, many of the other features of extensive agriculture described in this passage remained.

Another phenomenon as characteristic of the Italian South as the latifundium has been the highly concentrated, nucleated pattern of settlement. According to the 1951 Italian census, 74% of the population lived in villages and towns, only 26% in isolated farmsteads of homes spread across the countryside. But the nationwide figure of 74% was well surpassed if Southern Italy alone was considered: there, 87% of the population lived in villages, towns and cities. Refining the definition further, and relating the presence of dispersed settlement, of people living in isolated dwellings to those living in villages and towns, we find that in 1951 92.5% of the population of Southern Italy was concentrated in nucleated settlements, with only 7.5% living in the open countryside.<sup>10</sup> Isolated buildings were either used as homes for managers of the latifundia (fig. 11, 12), or as ranch dwellings for shepherds (fig. 13).

Over the greater part of the South, the countryside until the 1950's appeared indeed empty of people. Seen

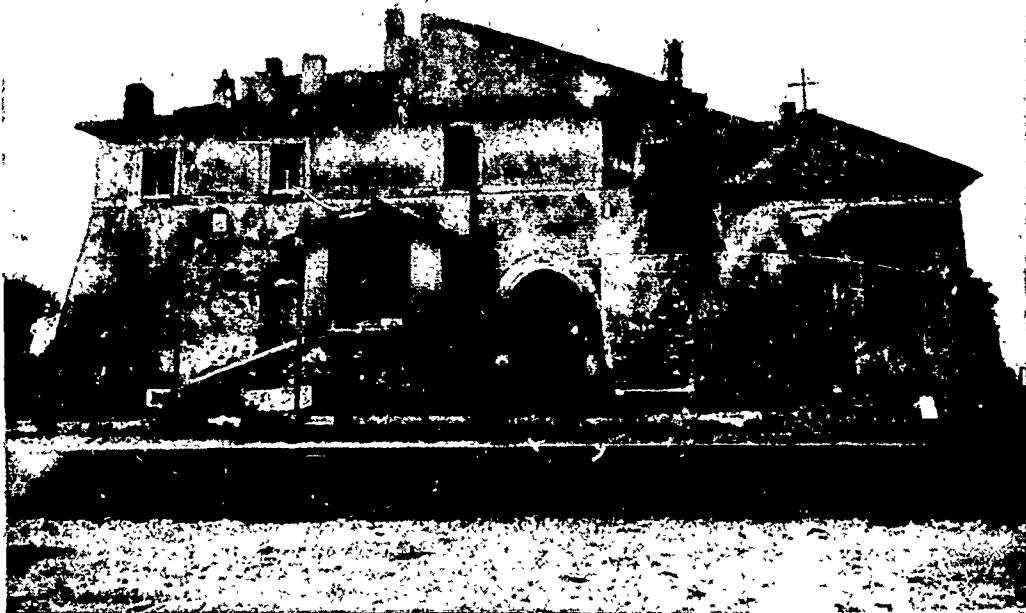


Figure 11. Old ranch headquarters, Agro Romano (Maremma).



Figure 12. Old masseria (ranch) on the Murge plateau (Puglia).



Figure 13. Old masseria (ranch) near Matera (Lucania).

from the window of a train, from an automobile passing through, "between one latifundium and the next,...interrupting its solemn sadness and bearing witness to the presence of man, there would appear a village on a hilltop, far distant from any others, and often hidden by and from them."<sup>11</sup> This nucleated pattern of settlement, resulting in the stark contrast between empty countrysides, devoid of individual dwellings, and densely populated villages and towns, has been attributed to many causes. Malaria, for centuries endemic in the often marshy coastal plains and river valleys, was identified as a cause, yet it is a fact that the peasant in the South is on his way to or from work in the fields at the very time, before dawn and after dusk, when the malarial mosquito is most likely to roam. Defense, presumably easier in hilltop settlements, was also mentioned, but nucleated settlements are as prevalent on completely flat lowlands, such as the Foggia plain of Apulia, as they are in rugged, mountainous Calabria.

The custom of living in villages and towns that prevails over most of the South reflects the social and economic structure of the region. The village or "peasant town" represents a real need for companionship and for help in time of troubles to the peasant. More importantly, in the words of Carlo Maranelli, "the survival of the Southern peasant depends above all on the prevailing system of land tenure and ownership. It is that system that forces the peasant to live near the marketplace where labor is for hire and, in many instances,

near the small piece of land which he rents or owns, a holding too small to support him and his family so that he must seek additional work elsewhere, on larger and more distant<sup>12</sup> holdings."

For generations, men in the villages and towns of southern Italy flocked to the marketplace early in the morning, hoping to be hired for the day by the managers of nearby landed estates, or by farmers with larger than average holdings. "The peasant is a man continuously looking for land", says Rossi-Doria, "wherever and under whatever circumstances he finds land, he cultivates it, and thus accumulates a number of small plots, varied in nature and distant from each other; one year it is here, the next year somewhere else; some in the zone of intensive cultivation surrounding the village, others in the valley where land is more fertile, still other plots up on the hillsides because, if the weather<sup>13</sup> is just right, the harvest may be better."

Living in the village or town, that was centrally located in relation to surrounding parcels of farmland, the peasant could somehow manage the long walks to a strip of land down in the valley, for hoeing, one day, to another parcel on the hilltop the next. In the nearly complete absence of any other kind of work, the peasant had to live near the marketplace where men would put themselves for hire, and whence he could reach all of the places where he might work for others or for himself. This, more than any other historical, social, or physical fact determined the nucleated

settlement pattern of the South of Italy.

Work for others was an unavoidable necessity to the great majority of the peasants of the South, for they either did not own any land at all, or owned only small parcels that were insufficient for the support of a family. Emigration, in the years immediately following the Second World War, dwindled to a trickle, and the outlook for the peasant was bleak.

Whether share tenant, share grower, or laborer, the peasant of South Italy suffered from chronic underemployment. The labor demands of farming were limited, and the Southern peasant averaged less than 150 days of work per year. There were a few areas where small peasant holdings

supported families at a decent level of income: the intensively cultivated fruit belts, citrus districts, and horticultural centers surrounding Naples, along the east coast near Bari, in a few isolated spots on the west coast of Calabria, and along the east coast of Sicily. Everywhere else the lot of the peasant was one of deep, hopeless poverty.

An inquiry carried out by a commission of the Italian parliament, in 1953, provided a statistical image of poverty in the South. "A sample survey of 58,400 families was taken for the week of September 14-20, 1953. Data were collected on housing, diet, and clothing, and were assessed by point values. Housing conditions were evaluated in terms of the number of persons per room. Diet was evaluated in points from three key items: meat, consumed 0-5 times per week;

sugar, none to 40 grams per head per week; and clothing conditions, based on a point evaluation of footwear per member of each family. By weighing and adding these values, a grading by points was arrived at. This revealed that 23.4% of all families in Italy were living in poverty. These fall into the two lowest out of ten categories, described as miseria (misery) and disagio (hardship), which had less than a half of a maximum of 44 points. Two thirds were found to have a median level of living, and one-tenth a high level of living. Viewed regionally, the North had 11.5% of the poor families, the Center 12%, the South 52.8% and the islands 23.7%. The South, with a quarter of the total population, had one half of the over-crowded families (over four per room!), of those with inadequate diets, and of those with inadequate clothing. Some 15.5% of the families in the South were living under the very lowest conditions of housing, 56.9% had totally inadequate diets, and 10.6% the lowest level of clothing conditions. Of the agricultural families, just over a half lived in poverty in Abruzzi and Campania, about two-thirds in Apulia and Lucania, and an appalling maximum of 73.2% in the most poverty-stricken area in Italy, Calabria.<sup>14</sup>

Under Fascist dictatorship, the voice of Southern poverty was not heard in the councils of Italy. There was a great deal of talk about the necessity of reclamation, but as we have seen, the efforts of the Fascist regime were few in number, and covered only a small fraction of the Southern countryside. When, in 1943, the lid was lifted from the

cauldron of discontent, it was evident that the new, free political activity was bound to result in concerted demands for social and economic change.

Several months before the war ended, the need for relief of the depressing conditions of the peasants of Southern Italy resulted in the first administrative action in farm matters of the new Italy, the Executive Order of October 10, 1944. This measure, entitled "Concession of Uncultivated Land to the Peasants" stated in its first article: "Farmers' associations, whether formally organized as cooperatives or organized in other ways, may obtain the concession of lands, owned by individuals or by public bodies, that are either uncultivated or insufficiently cultivated, in terms of the capacity of the land, or in terms of the nation's need of farm production."<sup>15</sup> Subsequent measures modified slightly the conditions under which these concessions may be made, but in the light of available information it seems that the land involved in such transfers to farmers' organizations was insignificant in terms of the need present. An official statement of the Italian government, issued in 1950, revealed that of a total of 220,000 hectares transferred officially to cooperatives under the terms of the 1944 executive order, only 166,000 hectares were actually brought under cultivation. Of that area, 83% is farmed by individuals and only 10% by cooperatives.<sup>16</sup>

One month after the Italian constitution became the law of the land, on February 24, 1948, a second Executive Order

was issued by the Italian government, entitled "Provisions in Favor of Small Peasant Farms". In its first article, it provided special tax relief for transfers of farmland by way of sale or special lease, provided that, first the purchaser or lessee was a full-time farmer, second, that the purchaser or lessee did not own land, or that his holding was insufficient for the support of his family, third, that the land thus sold or leased was of a nature likely to favor the development of small peasant holdings, and fourth, that the purchaser or lessee did not, within two years preceding the transaction<sup>17</sup> in question, sell farmland.

The lease contract referred to by this executive order was of a type now known only in Italy, the emphyteusis. "This is a form of tenure based on ancient Roman law. A piece of uncultivated land is ceded to a tenant cultivator on condition that he carries out, within a given time, certain improvements that usually involve the planting of vines and olive trees. The lease is perpetual and security of tenure is guaranteed. Rent is usually paid in kind and consists of a predetermined share of the product."<sup>18</sup> While Article 1556 of the Italian Civil Code confirms the foregoing provisions, Article 1565 adds that the lessee loses all rights if he fails to pay his rent for two consecutive years, or if the land under emphyteusis deteriorates, due to his failure to fulfill his contractual obligation to improve it.

Under the terms of the Executive Order of February 24, 1948, the state guaranteed interest payments on loans contracted for the purpose of such purchases of leases, and an Executive Order dated March 5, 1948, established a "Fund for the Development of Small Peasant Farms".

During the first five years that the Executive Orders of 1948 were in effect, an estimated 200,000 peasant farmers acquired by purchase or lease some 400,000 hectares of land, but these were almost without exception small transactions, averaging two hectares (five acres) apiece. Two-thirds of these transactions took place in four regions, Emilia and the Venetian region in the North, Apulia and Sicily in the South. The greatest single obstacle in the way of this particular measure was the lack of farm credit, and the lack of any real government financial support. In fact, the "Fund for the Development of Small Peasant Farms" during the 1948-1953 period provided moneys for the purchase of only 11,000<sup>19</sup> hectares of land out of the total of 400,000 hectares.

While attempting to respond to popular demand for the distribution of land to landless peasants through the transfer of uncultivated land to cooperatives, and by providing special tax relief for small holdings, the Italian government undertook other measures to cope with the grave problems of agriculture. Taking advantage of the fact that the 1933 reclamation law, with its punitive provision enabling the government to expropriate land if the owner failed to carry out reclamation tasks assigned to him (see p. 21)

was still valid, the government issued an Executive Order on December 31, 1947, admonishing landowners to cooperate in reclamation ventures, and reminding them that failure involved possible expropriation.

Also, in 1947, two regional agencies were established to make a dent in the backward state of agriculture in the South, provide employment, and possibly created small peasant holdings. The first of these, established by Executive Order of March 18, 1947, was the "Agency for Irrigation and Agrarian Reform in Apulia, Lucania, and Molise", an agency with powers to expropriate land when necessary to fulfill its purpose, and with a modest appropriation of funds for its activities. The second body, called the "Sila Development Agency", was established by law on December 31, 1947, and charged with reclamation, land improvement, and recreational development in the Sila uplands of Calabria.

In establishing the Apulia-Lucania and Sila agencies, the Italian government acted in the hope that cooperation rather than coercion could solve the crisis in the countryside. But the new agencies had only few funds and a small staff, all they could do was to solicit cooperation from local landowners. In one instance, in northern Apulia, compulsory plans for reclamation had already been drawn up and adopted twice, in 1934 and 1939. Yet there was not a single case of compulsory expropriation, as authorized by the law, for failure of the landowners to comply with the reclamation measures. There were too many loopholes, too

many ways to prolong almost indefinitely procedures of delay and appeal. The landowners had the means to carry on lawsuits, and government found itself stymied and frustrated again and again.

The voluntary principle of agrarian reform, based on the hope that landowners will recognize the needs of the small owner and landless peasant and satisfy them through reclamation, increased employment, and ultimately the establishment of small holdings, broke down in post-war Italy. But the political climate of the country has changed since the 1930's. Under Fascism, the vested interests' voice was the only one heard in the land, and government and press alike defended the unrestricted right of the landowner to do as he pleased. After 1945, Italy once more possessed active political parties, and it was axiomatic for the Left to defend the poor and the unemployed. The idea of land reform suddenly found powerful friends in Parliament and in the press.

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CHAPTER IV

LAND REFORM LAWS OF 1950:  
The "Sila" and "Extract" Laws

## IV

The steps taken by the Italian government during the years immediately following the Second World War to improve the lot of the landless peasant had but little effect. They were half-measures at best, designed to keep the growing unrest in rural areas under control, and they hardly made a dent in the conditions of misery prevailing in the Italian south. The response of the peasants took a radical and often violent form, land seizures.

More than once before, in the first decade of the 20th century, and again after 1918, Italian peasants moved in many districts to occupy land that had long lain fallow, to plough it and seed it, and bring in a harvest. Beginning in 1946, land seizures became increasingly frequent throughout the whole of Italy. Peasants of a village, led by leaders of local political groups, in some cases even by the parish priest, would attempt to occupy unused land within the village boundaries. The police, defending the rights of private property, would then meet them and drive them away. As tempers flared on both sides, land seizures became increasingly violent. In October, 1947, two peasants were killed in a clash between squatters and police, and the cause of the squatters was taken up by parties of the Left to dramatize the need for land reform.

The plight of the peasant in the South became a topic of discussion in the press and in Parliament. The promises made in the electoral campaigns after 1945, the principles of social and economic justice emphasized in the Italian constitution, all held out the hope of an early implementation of agrarian reform. When these hopes proved to be vain, the peasants resorted to direct action, to land seizure. The government was threatened by wholesale defiance of law and order, while the peasants felt that their cause was just, and were strengthened in that belief by the strong support of the left-wing parties in the Italian parliament.

In retrospect, it seems that the "Melissa incident" may have been the turning point in the history of land reform. In October, 1949, a group of squatters attempting to seize land clashed with the police, outside the village of Melissa, in Calabria. Three persons were killed in the encounter, and parliament and the press reacted with demands for immediate action on a land reform law.<sup>1</sup>

Italy's government, under the leadership of Alcide de Gasperi, responded immediately to the challenge. Planning for reclamation on a very small scale had already begun in the south, in the Sila uplands of Calabria, and the first project was to be inaugurated in November, 1949. Speaking at the ceremony marking the beginning of the Sila project, in the new village of Borgo Germano only three weeks after the Melissa incident, Prime Minister de Gasperi gave his countrymen his own definition of what land reform ought to

accomplish. "We are not repeating the slogan, 'the land belongs to him who tills it' ", said de Gasperi, " we are trying to establish small landowners who are capable of making a living, on land they redeemed with their own labor". (fig. 14) These then were the principles of the land reform: the creation of small, self-sufficient holdings, to be established on land that was either unused or had been misused in the past, to be " redeemed " by a strong reclamation program, carried out jointly by the owner and by the government.

On April 5, 1950, the government introduced its Land Reform Bill in parliament. The first article of the Bill was a clear statement of its philosophy, "In order to bring about a more equitable distribution of land, through the creation of owner-operated holdings, and to promote land improvement, the increase of farm production, and assistance to small and medium-sized holdings, land privately owned as existing before this law becomes effective, is subject to such limitations and obligations as are provided for by subsequent articles of this law."

The general land reform bill was to have applied to all of Italy. Aware of the need for immediate action, especially in the region of Calabria, however, the government decided not to await the outcome of what was bound to be a lengthy parliamentary debate on its general bill, and introduced a second bill, applying only to the Sila Plateau district of northern Calabria, to provide immediate action. This bill

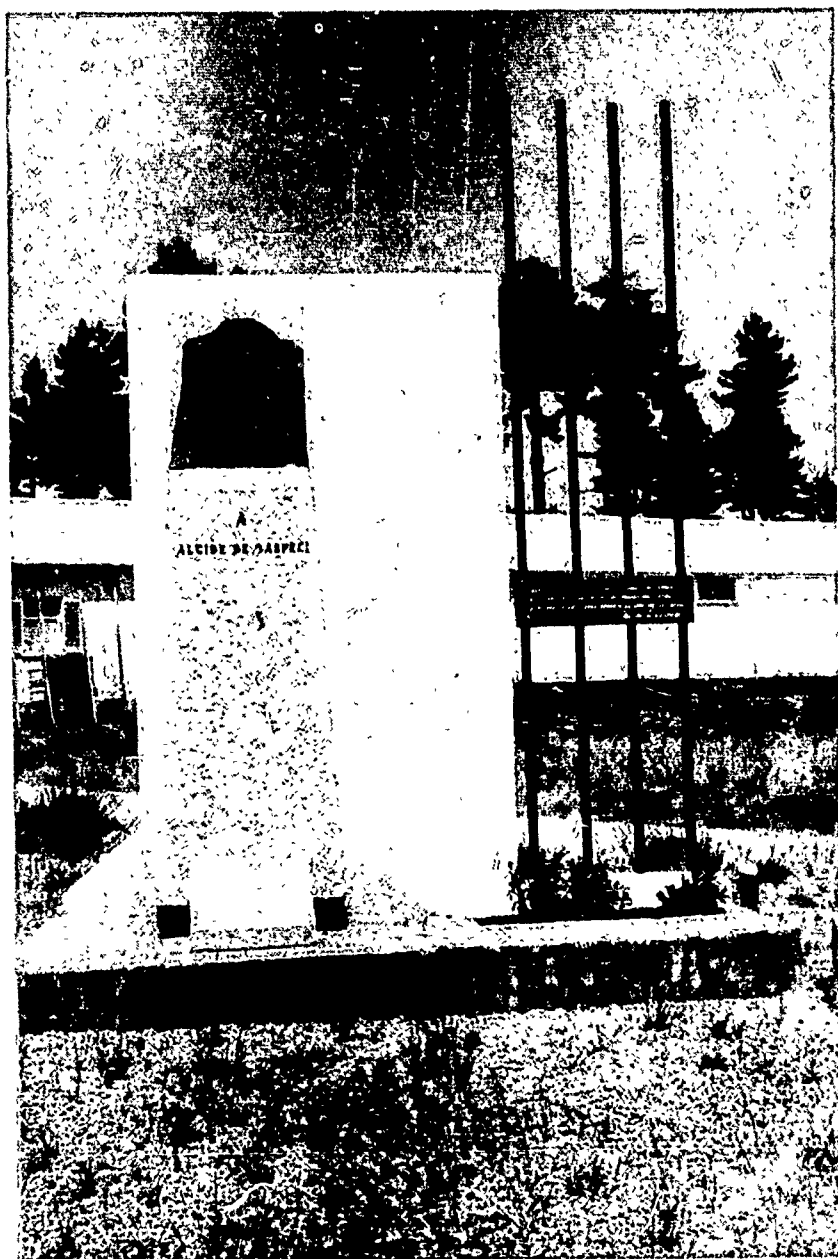


Figure 14. Monument to Alcide de Gasperi, former Prime Minister and one of the authors of the land reform, Borgo Germano, Sila plateau (Calabria).

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was passed on May 15, 1950, by Parliament and is known as the "Sila Law". Its most important clauses provided that henceforth privately owned holdings in the Sila district were to be limited to a maximum extent of 300 hectares (750 acres); that land in excess of the ceiling set by the law was to be expropriated and distributed in the form of small holdings to landless peasants; and that the Sila Development Board, organized in 1947 (see p. 52) was to implement the provisions of the law.

Action in Calabria was not sufficient, however, to avert the danger of further violence in other depressed areas of Italy. Recognizing this fact, and realizing that its general land reform bill, as submitted to parliament, was not likely to be passed in a short time, the government decided to request emergency legislation instead. The bill designed for this purpose, and passed by parliament on October 21, 1950, became known as the "Extract Law", because its most important provisions, concerned with the principles and methods of land expropriation, were extracted from the general land reform bill submitted to parliament in April 1950. The general bill never became law, but its guiding principle, land reform based on the use or misuse of land, dominates the entire structure of Italy's land reform program.

Adopting the criterion of land use as the basis of reform Italian lawmakers created a method of agrarian reform that differs radically from previous attempts carried out by similar reforms elsewhere. Land reform legislation as executed

in various countries during the thirty years previous to 1950 was based on either the legal-mechanical or the collective principle. Where the legal-mechanical principle was adopted, an upper limit of acreage for any one holding was established by the law. Land in excess of that acreage was expropriated by the state, compensation to be paid the owner, and the acreage thus expropriated was distributed to claimants, thereby creating many small holdings from a single large estate. Under this form of legislation, the use to which the land was put previously, and the contribution it had made to the livelihood of people living on or near it, was ignored. Model farms lost acreage in excess of the upper limit in the same manner as holdings that consisted entirely of meager pastures. Size was the only criterion of expropriation.

In countries under Communist influence land reform programs followed the collective principle. All private land holdings were expropriated, regardless of size, and title to the land was vested either in collective farms, representing groups of farmers, or in the government itself, as owner of state farms. Household plots, usually less than an acre in size and adjacent to farm houses, are the only remaining privately owned land holdings in this system, all other land is communally owned.

The Italian land reform, instead of following either the legal-mechanical or the collective principle, states that it is the use to which land is put that determines what propor-

tion of a given holding the owner may retain. If land is used wisely and intensively, employing a substantial number of workers, and producing a high income per unit area, the portion of the holding to be expropriated is relatively small. If, on the other hand, the land is used extensively, producing a low income per unit area, and employing only a small, largely seasonal labor force, the loss of land to the owner through expropriation is bound to be high.

Under the "Land Reform Extract Law" of 1950, the proportion of a given holding to be expropriated was calculated on the basis of the total taxable income of the holding, combined with the taxable income per hectare. Total taxable income was that declared on January 1, 1943 by the owner. On that date Italy's post-war inflation had not yet taken place, and the figures, entered on the tax rolls, are part of the public record. Taxable income per hectare is not calculated, however, by the simple method of dividing total declared income by total acreage. The law expressly states that woodland and land not in crops are to be deducted from the acreage used as "denominator" in calculating the income per hectare. The percentage of area to be expropriated is shown by a table, appended to the law.

The expropriation table consists of two columns. The vertical column shows the total taxable income of the holding, the numerator; the horizontal column the taxable income per hectare, the denominator. The vertical column consists of thirteen categories, showing total taxable income, the lowest

being less than 30,000 lire. Properties having a total taxable income under 30,000 lire are exempt from expropriation. The other categories range from 30,000 to 60,000 lire, then by 100,000 lire categories to 1 million lire. Above 1 million lire there are two categories, 1 million to 1.2 million, and in excess of 1.2 million lire.

In the horizontal column of the expropriation table income per hectare is shown in ten groups, ranging from more than 1,000 lire down by 100 lire groups to 100 lire or less. The principle of the table is that, given the same income per hectare, the percentage of the property subject to expropriation increases in direct ratio to the increase in total taxable income. On the other hand, given the same total taxable income, the percentage of property subject to expropriation increases in inverse ratio to income per hectare. In this manner, the law offered a premium to more intensively managed properties, on the assumption that the intensivity of land use is reflected in higher income per unit area.

In calculating the proportion of land to be expropriated, the law allowed one more provision in favor of the landowner. The total taxable income of the property, instead of being used as a single sum, could be broken up into segments to fit the categories of the expropriation table. Thus, for example, if the total taxable income in a holding was 160,000 lire, this sum could be broken into four segments, i.e. 30,000 + 30,000 + 40,000 + 60,000 lire, and the percentage of

expropriation calculated separately for each segment. Calculated on that basis, the land subject to expropriation was distinctly less than if the calculation was based on the total income, 160,000 lire, that would have placed the property in the much higher bracket of 100,000 to 200,000 lire taxable income.

Parliament entrusted the complex task of implementing the land reform laws to the executive branch of the Italian government, directing it to establish appropriate administrative agencies for the purpose. Since certain specialized agencies, such as the National Veterans Organization, the Sila Development Board, the Agency for the Development of Irrigation and Land Reform in Puglia, Lucania and Molise and the "Flumendosa Agency" in Sardinia were already dealing with problems closely associated with land reform, the laws of 1950 directed the government to use these existing agencies in carrying out the land reform in the districts over which they already had jurisdiction. In other parts of Italy new agencies were created for the specific purpose of administering the land reform.

Under the first category, of already existing agencies, land reform in Calabria came under the jurisdiction of the Sila Development Board. Land reform in the regions of Puglia, Lucania and Molise was entrusted to a "Special Section", organized with the Agency for the Development of Irrigation and Land Reform in those regions. In Sardinia, the "Flumendosa Agency", established in 1946 to promote reclamation in the southern part of the island, was put in charge of land

reform in that district. The National Veterans' Organization, that had already undertaken reclamation works in the region of Campania, was given responsibility, under a "Special Section" within the organization, for land reform there.

The four new agencies all established by the government in 1951 under the provisions of the land reform "Extract Law", included the "Agency for the Settlement of the Pò Delta", the "Agency for the Colonization of the Maremma in Tuscany and Latium", the "Agency for the Development of the Territory of Fucino" which supplanted the Maremma agency in 1954 for part of its territory, and the "Agency for Agricultural and Property Reform in Sardinia". While the measures establishing the administrative structure of these agencies took the form of Executive Orders by the Council of Ministers, the control of the entire activity of each of the land reform agencies is vested in the Minister of Agriculture, and by him entrusted to the "Division for Land Reclamation and Resettlement" in his department. This division of the Ministry of Agriculture acts as coordinator of the several agencies, issuing basic directives, and controlling the implementation of the land reform program.

Each of the land reform agencies is administered by a Board of Directors, consisting of fifteen members, and headed by a chairman, all appointed by presidential decree, on proposal made by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. Five of the members of the Board of Directors represent the five government departments directly concerned with land

reform: Agriculture, Finance, Treasury, Public Works, and Labor and Social Security. Five represent the newly established small holders, being presidents of cooperatives organized under the law and being elected by the heads of all the cooperatives within the area of jurisdiction of the agency. Five members of the Board of Directors are appointed from a group of highly qualified technicians described as "experts on land reform problems".

The day-to-day administration of the agencies is in the hands of the Director-General, nominated by the Board of Directors and appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. The administrative organization of the agencies consists of a central office where tasks of planning, central administration, and accounting are carried on, and by field offices which are distributed throughout the territory of the agency.

The territories that are included in the areas of jurisdiction of the several land reform agencies spread throughout the entire breadth and width of Italy, from the Pò delta in the far north, to the islands in the deep south. Their physical, historical, and social characteristics are so widely divergent as to make generalizations concerning their nature virtually impossible. They did have one feature in common, however, which justified their being included under the provisions of the "Sila" and "Extract" laws: the prevalence of large landed estates over substantial portions of their territory, and the presence there of large numbers

of landless peasants, and of small owners with holdings so small that additional land was needed to insure their existence.

The northermost of the territories affected by the land reform laws was the delta of the Pò River: it falls under the jurisdiction of the "Pò Delta Settlement Agency". It covers an irregularly shaped semi-circle, extending from the lagoon of Venice in the north to the territory of the township of Ravenna in the south. The total area of the jurisdiction of this agency is about 260,000 hectares, comprising 33 townships, (comuni), in the provinces of Venice, Rovigo, Ferrara, and Ravenna. All of the territory of the agency is low-lying land, subject to periodic floods by the several branches of the Pò River in its central and northern part, while in the south a substantial section, at the beginning of the land reform activity, was covered by the shallow lagoon of Comacchio.

Prior to land reform, substantial works of reclamation and of flood control had been carried out for parts of the delta, but little was done to alleviate the lot of the large masses of the unemployed or the partially employed agricultural laborers. This state of affairs was reflected by the strong radical traditions that had long prevailed among the farm laborers of the area.

One of the largest territories to be included in the land reform is the Maremma district, which extends from Pisa southward along the western, Tyrrhenian shore of Italy

as far south as the city of Rome. The "Settlement Agency for the Maremma in Tuscany and Latium" covers a territory of 956,638 hectares. This comprises the entire province of Grosseto, nine townships in the province of Pisa, three in Siena, three in Leghorn, twenty-seven in Rome, and twenty-four in Viterbo. Although the agency bears in its name the term "Maremma", that geographical expression traditionally had been applied only to the coast lands which extend from the mouth of the Arno, near Pisa, south to the mouth of the Tiber, near Rome. Since early medieval times, these coastal plains, varying considerably in size, have been characterized by the prevalence of coastal marshes, the wide-spread diffusion of malaria, and a relatively sparse population. The towns and villages, for the most part, clung to the hillsides overlooking the plains. Until the period of World War II, much of the Maremma was used only as winter pasture of sheep and cattle, that were driven up to the Appennines in the summer. This district has long been associated with a particular kind of cattle, large and heavy boned, with huge horns, reared as beasts of burden, and to a lesser extent, as beef cattle, which have been given the name of Maremma breed.

In addition to the coastlands, the territory under the jurisdiction of the Maremma agency also includes the area of volcanic uplands which extend from the Arno and Tiber valleys westward to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Most of this area, as well as the coastal plains themselves, has been

characterized by the presence of large landed estates. Level land is rare in the Maremma and the process of land redistribution was more complex here than in the Pò delta, as attempts were made to establish viable farms, each with its share of level and hilly land.

The "Agency for the Development of the Fucino", organized on August 9, 1954, is located entirely in the province of Aquila, in the heart of the central Appenines. This lake basin, surrounded on all sides by high Appenine peaks, represented for many centuries the only level land within the whole of the central Appenines and many attempts had been made to reclaim it. After numerous unsuccessful tries, the lake occupying the basin was drained in the second half of the nineteenth century by Prince Torlonia, who owned the entire basin, and after reclamation let it out, on a rental basis, in numerous small farm units.<sup>2</sup> Land redistribution in the Fucino was facilitated by the fact that virtually all the agricultural land within the lake basin was in the hands of one owner and the creation of small farms took<sup>3</sup> place here earlier than in most of the other territories.

In the Campania region surrounding Naples, the National Foundation for War Veterans (see p. 23) was active prior to World War II in the lower Volturno valley, between the city of Capua and the Tyrrhenian coast. Under the land reform "Extract Law", the territory of the lower Volturno and an area similar in character, comprising the lower valley of the Sele River, south of the city of Salerno, were placed

under the jurisdiction of the National Foundation. These comprise a territory of 121,431 hectares, eleven townships in the province of Caserta (the former Volturno reclamation district), and nine townships in the province of Salerno. In the Volturno area, the task of the agency was to bring its pre-war works up to date, expand them further, and create more small holdings; in the lower Sele valley the task was much more difficult, involving the reclamation of an area noted for its high incidence of malaria, used hitherto only as winter pasture for sheep and year round pasture for water buffalo.

The largest of all territories under the jurisdiction of a single agency is administered by the "Special Section for Land Reform" of the "Agency for the Development of Irrigation and Land Reform in Puglia-Lucania and Molise". This new "Special Section", established under the "Extract Law", controls not only substantial portions of the region of Apulia on the southeast coast of the Italian peninsula but also the easternmost portion of the region of Molise immediately to the north, and the greater part of the region of Lucania to the southwest. It has a total area of 1,453,181 hectares and includes eleven townships in the province of Bari, five in Brindisi, thirty-two in Foggia, six in Lecce, eight in Taranto, twenty-one in Matera, twenty-four in Potenza, and fourteen in Campobasso.

Within this very large area, all major physiographic divisions of the Italian peninsula are represented. It

comprises the greater part of the lower part of the Foggia plain, also known as the "Travoliere of Apulia "; part of the southern Appenines, from the Adriatic coast of Molise through the interior of northern Apulia and of Lucania: the low limestone plateau of the Murge in Apulia; and coastal areas on both the eastern and western shores of the Salentine peninsula, the "hell of the Italian boot". Thus the territories of this land reform agency represent a wide variety of landscapes, united by their lack of adequate water supply in many districts, by the prevalence of large land holdings, and by the presence of many hundreds of thousands of landless laborers.

In the peninsula which constitutes the "toe of the Italian boot", Calabria, the "Sila Development Agency", organized in 1947, was given authority by the "Sila Law" of May, 1950, to carry out land reform in its area of jurisdiction. This comprises 503,779 hectares, the greater part of two of the provinces of Calabria: fifty-five townships in the province of Catanzaro and forty-seven townships in the province of Cosenza. The core of this territory is the high plateau of the Sila, heavily forested and, like the other land reform areas, prior to land reform, controlled by large landed estates, providing little employment for the dense population centers of the eastern, Ionian coast of the Calabrian peninsula. In addition to the plateau, there is in this region a mosaic of tiny coastal plains and heavily eroded low hills, which afforded barely a marginal existence

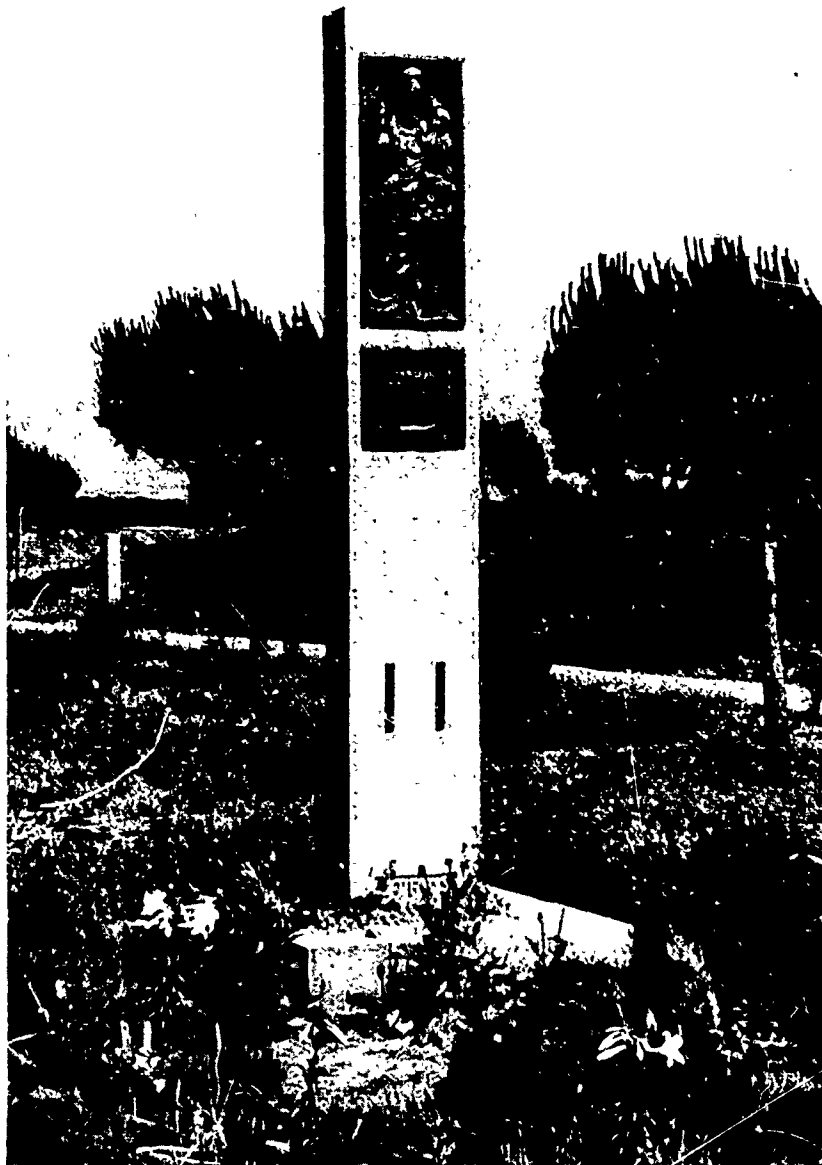


Figure 15. "Madonna of the Fields": symbol of Sardinian Land Reform Agency.

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for the population of small land owners and numerous landless laborers. The land reform "Extract Law" also assigned to the "Sila Development Agency" a territory comprising 41,600 hectares, twelve townships in the province of Reggio Calabria, known as the district of Caulonia, classified as a potential land reform district.

In southernmost Sardinia, the Flumendosa Agency, established in 1946 for the purposes of land reclamation, irrigation, and power development, had a "Special Section for Land Reform" added to it, to carry out land reform in the plain of Cagliari in the southern part of the island. In the Cagliari plain, both at its northern end, at Arborea (see p. 31) and in its central portion, the National Foundation for Veterans had already carried out substantial works prior to World War II, and beginnings had been made for another project in northern Sardinia, at Fertilia, by the same agency. Under the land reform "Extract Law", as "Agency for Land Reform in Sardinia" was established, having jurisdiction over the entire island except for the Flumendosa territory, and including the areas where the National Foundation for Veterans had been operating.<sup>4</sup> (fig. 15)

One region of Italy, although beset by problems of agrarian reform similar to those of the rest of the country, followed a path altogether different from any other region. Under the terms of the 1948 constitution, Sicily has autonomous status as a "region", with its own legislative and executive branches of government. Matters related to

agriculture are under the jurisdiction of the Sicilian regional parliament, and that body did not accept the provisions of the "Extract Law", promulgating instead a regional land reform law for Sicily, in December, 1950. As a result, the course of the land reform in Sicily became completely separated from the rest of Italy and, except for a few general data, statistics dealing with the land reform do not include information about Sicily. Discussion of the land reform, in the following pages, will be limited to those areas under the jurisdiction of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, the central controlling body of all land reform agencies except that of Sicily.

Procedures for the implementation of the land reform are contained in the Sila Law and the Land Reform Extract Law, passed by the Italian Parliament in 1950. The first step of the procedure was the publication of detailed plans for expropriation by the several land reform agencies. All owners were given the right to present counter-arguments within twenty-five days of publication of the expropriation plans. The counter arguments were then examined by the several agencies, before definitive expropriation plans were published.

The plans and proposals for land reform, after being examined in detail by special parliamentary commissions appointed for each of the agencies, were given the effect of law by the issuance of Executive Orders, this being the final step in the preliminary procedure.

A significant provision favoring the former owners was incorporated in the land reform extract law, under the name of the "residual third" concession. This concession signifies in effect that only two thirds of the land subject to expropriation under the plans established by the land reform agency, can be immediately expropriated. On the remaining third, the land owner has the option of retaining title, if within sixty days after the expropriation plans had been published, he requests special permission for land improvement on this "residual third" of the property. This cannot exceed 300 hectares in any instance.

If the land reform agency grants this request, the land owner must, within a period of four years, put into effect on the "residual third", all of the land improvement measures which the land reform agency has undertaken on the rest of his land, already expropriated. Once this has been accomplished, the proprietor has to divest himself of his right to one half of this land and retain only the other half of the "residual third", that is, approximately fifteen per cent of his original holding. However at that time he will receive, for the one half of the "residual third" turned over to the land reform agency, indemnity for expropriation and will be reimbursed for the costs of land improvement that he had undertaken. This proviso holds only if the landowner undertakes improvement and reclamation on his "residual third" within two years. If he has not done so, he will lose by expropriation the entire area of the "residual third" without

compensation.

In order to insure that lands which already have been substantially improved do not fall under its provisions, the land reform "Extract Law" exempted specifically "intensively and efficiently operated farms" which constitute "model farms", as long as their territory did not exceed a total of five hundred hectares. Stringent provisions were attached to this exemption, however, defining the model farms in specific terms. These terms provided that the average output of principal crops per unit area, calculated on the basis of the five years preceeding the beginning of the land reform must exceed by at least forty per cent the average for the same crops in the agricultural zone where the farm is located.

A second limiting proviso concerns the labor employed on the model farms. The density of labor employed on the farm must be calculated in manpower units that, by Executive Order of March 8, 1951, were defined as follows: men between the age of fifteen and sixty-eight represent one labor unit, women of the same age group, 0.6 labor units, and men and women younger than fifteen or older than sixty-eight represent 0.5 labor units.<sup>6</sup> The law provides that employment on a model farm must represent a minimum of 0.3 labor units per hectare and that "the economic and social conditions of the persons who live on the farm must be distinctly higher than the average for the agricultural zone". Finally, the holding must be divided into small farms and housing for employees which must satisfy local requirements of public health.

In order to qualify for exemption under this provision of the law, the owners have to apply for certification to the Minister of Agriculture and Forests. 710 farms requested certification as "model farms" under the special provisions of the land reform laws. 106 farms were exempted under these provisions; these represented a total area of 61,364 hectares of which an area of 39,242 hectares was exempted. This final figure amounts to a little more than five per cent of the total area available for the creation of farms under the land reform, representing, on December 31, 1958, 644,100<sup>7</sup> hectares.

Once the plans for expropriation were settled the next step was the determination of the indemnities to be paid to the expropriated owners. These indemnities were based on the taxable value of the property, as ascertained for the progressive real estate tax, these values having already been used as the basis for the establishment of the percentage of land to be expropriated from each holding. The indemnities to former owners were paid in negotiable government bearer stocks at five percent interest, redeemable within twenty-five years.

The amount the new owners have to pay was established as representing not more than two-thirds or the cost of reclamation of the land, plus two-thirds of the expropriation indemnity that was paid to the owners. Under the law, the new landholders were to pay for the land in thirty yearly installments, at an interest rate of 3.5% per annum.

However, the law stated that the first two installments were to represent only capital payments without interest.

In order to prevent speculation on the part of the new owners, or the accumulation of large farms by consolidation in the hands of one owner of several of the small holdings, the law established specific safeguards. The newly assigned lands have to be paid for within thirty years, but prior payments of the yearly installments are not permissible. Furthermore, until the entire purchase price is paid, the lands assigned to the new owners cannot be transferred, or leased, or in any way alienated, either totally or in part. Finally, the rights of the assignees cannot be involved in any legal contract as a security, except in favor of the land reform agency.

The purpose of the land reform was to establish new small holdings for the benefit of the landless laborers. To ensure this, the law set forth specific provisions for the selection of the assignees. First, they had to qualify as "agricultural laborers", with enough experience in farming to run their own farm, a qualification that had to be certified by the agricultural inspector of the province, a government expert in the matter. Secondly, the assignees had to be selected from among men who either did not own any land at all, or only a small plot that was insufficient to cover their needs.

The "Extract Law" added to these qualifications the proviso that farmers who held "emphyteusis" contracts

(see p.50) on long-term basis, and providing for reclamation of the land, be given preference among those eligible for assignment of new farms.

All assignments of land were made on a three-year trial basis. At the end of three years a definite contract was entered into by the assignee and the land reform agency, representing the government. This provision allowed the agency to exercise a limited degree of direct control, and to eliminate men whose technical competence did not meet the standards established by the law. (figs.16,17)

When an assignee dies, his wife and children inherit all his rights. However, they must satisfy the requirements established by the law, that is, have enough competence to run the farm, if they wish to do so. If they decide to leave the holding, or if they do not qualify from the technical point of view, the land reform agency will reimburse the surviving members of the family for payments on the contract made until that time, and for any increase in the value of their equity in the farm that results from the work of the original assignee.

Two types of land assignments were made by the land reform agencies, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the law. One was the family farm, podere, theoretically sufficient in terms of its size, and of the eventual income it would produce, to support a family. The second was the fractional land assignment, quota, to supplement farmland already owned by the assignee, to round out his holdings, and to allow him

to become independent on the combined strength of whatever little land he may have owned before the reform with the added strength of the quota.

As of December 31, 1958, 46,075 family farms, poderi, were assigned to new owners. These represent a total area of 423,141 hectares, with the average podere being of 9.18 hectares, or 22.7 acres. In addition 45,384 quotas were also assigned, with a total area of 110,874 hectares: the average quota represented 2.44 hectares, 5.9 acres. The above figures, representing assignments of quotas or poderi to 91,459 persons, refer to all of the land reform districts except Sicily.

Examining the data pertaining to the status of the new assignees prior to land reform, it appears that 94 per cent of these belonged to those groups singled out by the law to be its beneficiaries. Of the 91,459 assignees, 44,343 (48.4%) were laborers; 33,657 (36.7%) were tenant farmers; and 8,378 (9.2%) small owner-operators, prior to the land reform. Only 5,281 (5.7%) belonged to "other" groups.

These figures, indicating that less than one hundred thousand families benefited from the land reform, appear to justify the apprehensions of many a critic of the land reform program of 1950, who pointed out that there was not enough land available for expropriation, under the provisions of the laws of 1950, to satisfy the land hunger of the Italian peasant.



Figure 16. Assignee and family, having just received contract for new farm; Avezzano (Fucino), April 6, 1952.



Figure 17. Bicycles distributed to assignees by land reform agency; Avezzano (Fucino), April 6, 1952.



Figure 18. New owner with his family; Borgo La Martella (Lucania).



Figure 19. An assignee and his family; Conca d'Oro settlement (Puglia).

But a purely statistical approach to this question, based on the number of assignees as a percentage of those eligible for receiving land, provides only a partial answer. For we must keep in mind that in the tightly knit world of family loyalties whence the assignees were drawn, one hundred thousand individuals represent probably close to one million people, taking into account the number of children as well as grandparents, who depend for their survival on these small parcels. One million people stood for more than two per cent of the total population of Italy in 1951. What is even more important, and what places this figure in its true context, is the fact that the vast majority of the new assignees came from the group with the lowest incomes, from the least privileged strata of rural Italy.

The impact of the land reform was not merely statistical: it represented a token of faith in their government for the landless, and many thought of it as a promissory note of other forms of help. It is not an exaggeration to state that, at least in the beginning, the land reform stood for a hope brighter than anything else since the days when mass emigration overseas held out the promise of a brighter future for the Italian peasant, in the early years of the twentieth century. (figs. 18,19)

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CHAPTER V

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM:

Roads, Housing, Settlement

Two reports, prepared by the Reclamation and Resettlement Division of the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, in 1965, for the general public<sup>1</sup>, and for an international conference on land reform, organized by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations<sup>2</sup>, put the total expenses of the land reform during the period 1951-1965 at 620 billion lire, 1 billion dollars.

The largest category of these investments, 381 billion lire, or 62% of the total was spent on land improvements: preparation of the land for cultivation, planting of trees and vines, irrigation works, farm buildings, farm and access roads, and overhead expenses chargeable to land improvement. 73 billion lire, 12% of the total, was expended on the purchase of equipment: livestock, machinery, field transport equipment, fertilizers, seed, etc. 87 billion lire, 14% of the total, was invested in resettlement: new villages, service centers, isolated public buildings, highways, power lines, aqueducts, and overhead expenses chargeable to these investments. 47 billion lire, 7% of the total, was represented by services to the new settlers: adult and vocational education, farm extension service, home economics courses, and financial assistance to the assignees. 32 billion, 5% of the total, was spent on the establishment of cooperatives and on new agricultural industries.

These figures throw a clear light on the workings of the land reform, and provide an overview of its material achievements. But they have to be seen against the background of the landscape as it existed before the men and machines of the land reform agencies began their work. The following passage describes one of the districts of southern Italy, along the shores of the Ionian Sea, in Lucania, as they appeared to an acute observer of the Italian scene in 1949.

"A feeling of immemorial desolation haunts this southern shore. Running back from the sea is a dreary waste of marsh and scrub, cut up at intervals by the wide beds of the mountain rivers; rivers useless for irrigation or transport, during the winter impetuous torrents of soil-laden water, at other seasons dry expanses of arid stones and scrub. The occasional railway stations exist, one feels, rather for the purpose of giving a rest to the locomotives than for any other reason; for nothing lives along this barren shire, and for a sight of human settlements the eye must search the folds and skylines<sup>3</sup> of the distant mountains."

In 1952, three years after these lines appeared in print, I travelled along the highway that parallels the railroad, and saw the changes beginning to appear on the face of the land. For the first time in centuries, there was a crop of wheat growing in the fields, trim white houses dotted the plain, and at dusk a group of singing peasants were walking home, after a day's work on their land. Not all land reform areas did appear in this light, to be sure, this was an almost

idealized image of the profound transformation brought by the reform, but the impression was unforgettable: these lands, flourishing in the days of the Greek settlements before the time of Christ, are being brought back to life once more.

To start the work of reclamation and settlement, roads were the first necessity. Italy has long been noted for its excellent highways, and the arterial roads throughout the land reform areas were up to that high standard. But once the traveller left the main roads, he was jolted over rutted trails, or over tracks made by mules and sheep, for these were the only means of travel over the vast expanses of the latifundia.

Aldo Ramadoro, president of the Puglia land reform agency, stated the case for the priority of road building when he pointed out that "since the purpose of the land reform is to ensure lasting settlement of new small farms that, through substantial changes in their environment, could guarantee the self-sufficiency of the holdings, it is clear that without...access for people and equipment, and the possibility of shipping out of produce, whatever may be done in redistributing land will result in nothing more than simple transfers of property, recorded in the registry of deeds."<sup>4</sup>

The road building program, the construction of individual farm buildings, and the design and distribution of rural service centers may be defined as the building of the infrastructure of the land reform. These activities represented a source of substantial employment, and therefore of cash

income, for the assignees during the first period of the reform, as well as enabling them to get to and from their holdings, to have a roof over their heads, and to have a place to turn to for technical assistance, social contact, and services of all kinds. The present chapter is intended to be a review of these facets of the land reform: roads, dwellings, and service centers.

According to the 1960 survey of the land reform, 4200 kilometers of new roads were built by the land reform agencies. 1500 kilometers of roads were reconditioned, and made fit for wheeled, motorized traffic. Of these roads, some 4700 kilometers are farm access roads, particularly important since these connect the new farmsteads with the existing primary and secondary road network.<sup>5</sup>

In designing a road building program, the land reform agencies encountered three major problems. First of all, though much of Italy is mountainous, raw materials for the building of concrete roads are widely scattered, and located too far from the principal land reform areas for economic transport. Thus, locally available materials had to be depended upon. A second problem was the need to build access and secondary roads as quickly as possible, therefore the traditional, and time-consuming, road building techniques could not be relied upon: roads were needed quickly, to allow the transport of building materials to the new farm sites, and connect the farmsteads with the existing roads. Thirdly, costs of building the new roads had to be kept low, since a

substantial part of the cost was to be paid later, in yearly installments, by the new small holders, as part of the purchase price of their farms, and the agencies wanted to avoid any unnecessary increase in the costs to be borne by the assignees.

The problem of using locally available road building materials was solved in part through the introduction of new road building techniques, that used whatever was readily at hand, and in part by the character of traffic that was to use the new access roads. These roads were to serve the needs of small farms, and except for the first stage of development, when some heavy equipment for construction had to pass, the roads were designed for light traffic only. Carts, light trucks, small farm machinery were going to be the principal users of the new access roads, besides pedestrians, bicycles and motor scooters, thus dirt roads, that could be built quickly and economically, would be satisfactory.

In building the new farm access roads, highly mechanized techniques were introduced, dependent on machinery and on a small number of skilled operators. Bulldozers removed the surface vegetation cover, while mobile laboratories, working side by side with the building crews, analyzed the structure of the soil, to establish the type of materials that needed to be added to it to ensure its carrying capacity. Motor graders cut ditches, to drain the road bed. After this, and a first scraping of the road surface, the roadbed was sprinkled to ensure the necessary degree of moisture of the

base, then compacted by scrapers or heavy rollers.

Once the road base was ready, a mixture of sand, clay and stone was prepared in mobile crushers on the site, laid in windrows on the roadbed, and graded by motor graders. Next huge rubber-tired rollers, loaded with sand, compacted the top layer. When the drainage ditches on the sides were in good shape, the road was ready for use. Experience has shown that under light use these dirt roads stand up well, and that their maintenance is comparatively inexpensive.

Once the access roads were built, the next phase of the settlement program could get under way, the building of farm homes. This phase of the reform has been the subject of a great deal of criticism: it represented a complete break with traditional patterns of settlement and demanded a major readjustment on the part of the new farmer and his family.

The overwhelming majority, 92.5%, of the population of southern Italy lived in nucleated settlements, villages and towns, in 1951, at the beginning of the land reform. (see p.44) The individual farm dwelling, widespread in the hills of Tuscany and on the lowlands of the Pò valley, was virtually unknown in the South and, for that matter, in the Maremma land reform district, in central Italy. The security, real or imaginary, represented by the village or town, the advantages of work and recreation that it stood for, outweighed the more efficient way of farming that the individual farm, close to the holding, might offer. The farm home, away from the traditional settlement center, was a new departure for rural

southern Italy.

The land reform agencies had decided, at the outset of their settlement program, that houses built on the farm were to be the rule, clusters of houses the exception. The agencies pointed out that by living near the fields he tilled, the farmer could cut down on his "travel time", the hours he spent walking from his home in the village to the outlying farmland. Further, by living on the land, the women too could contribute to the work demanded by the farm, rather than staying in their homes all day, as was earlier the case.

Prior to the land reform, farm animals were a rarity in peasant households. The landless peasant seldom had any cash to purchase anything more than a mule or a donkey. On the new farms, there were going to be a stable to hold cows, mules, or a horse, and a pigsty and a chicken coop, representing food for the family larder and a source of cash income as well. The agencies made much of the fact that disposal of animal waste on a single farmstead was an asset, for manure could be used on the fields, while large numbers of animals in the closely packed traditional villages represented a real health hazard. Contamination of water was much more likely by keeping stabled animals in a village than by having them on farms spread far apart.

Finally, the agencies expressed the view that the new farmers could easily reach the neighboring village on bicycles or motor scooters; in fact, on more than one occasion the agencies made bicycles available to the assignees on long-term



Fototeca Lusa Roma

Figure 20. Land reform homesteads: Metaponto (Lucania)—courtesy:  
Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.

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loans. And if the villages were too far, service centers were going to be built, to provide all of the services the village would normally offer.

Whether the assignees were convinced by these arguments or not, at least during the first five years or so of the land reform, they had no choice. The new houses were built, and they were expected to occupy them. The immediate task confronting the land reform agencies was to decide the distribution pattern of the new houses, and the types of houses they were to build.

Since the land reform areas embraced lowlands, hills and, in a few areas, low mountains as well, there could not be a uniform solution applied to these problems. The options available were accordingly varied and numerous. Under most favorable conditions, in areas where water was readily available, and the soils were good and tillable, the new farmsteads could be built, each on its own land, the sole condition being that the houses had to be on the access roads. (fig. 20) In areas where the ground water resources were limited, the solution adopted was to build clusters of four or six houses, at or near the point where the holdings shared boundaries. In this case, one well could provide water, and further savings were available in building one electric transformer to provide current for the entire cluster.

In Sardinia and in the Apulia-Lucania-Molise region, local conditions of soil, drainage, and roadability imposed a different solution, the building of large clusters of houses,

from fifteen to fifty to a cluster. These were located near enough to the farmsteads so that the maximum distance separating any farm home from its holding would not exceed two to three miles. In the course of time, these clusters tended to attract small stores, they were endowed with certain service functions, and became residential centers, borghi residenziali. No longer did they function as a conglomeration of individual farm homes, rather they assumed new functions that classify them with the service centers that were being developed by the land reform agencies.

During the first eight years of the program, a total of 27,560 houses, comprising 49,786 rooms, were finished. An additional 5,537 existing houses were rebuilt. Further, 23,285 stables were built, 1,374 more rebuilt; 5,734 new wells were dug, and 451 existing wells were reconditioned.<sup>6</sup> Behind these figures is the effort of the land reform agencies to provide adequate housing for the new farmers and their animals, that would meet minimum standards and could be maintained by the farmers themselves.

The norm accepted by the agencies for the building of houses was an average farm family composed of 3 "working units" (see p. 72). In practice, this represented a family of father and mother of working age, above fifteen and below sixty-eight years; from two to five children under fifteen years of age; and one or more older household members above the age of sixty-eight. The minimum dwelling would thus have to have two bedrooms, a kitchen-living room, bath-toilet

and storage space. (fig.21)

The actual floor space of the new houses varies from 1,076 square feet (two-bedroom unit) to 1,604 square feet (four-bedroom unit). There are only a few larger houses, with more than four bedrooms. As to the type of building, both one and two-story houses are well represented, in an attempt to build along lines that would fit the pattern typical of the district. In the one-story house, kitchen and bedrooms are accessible through a common entry, while the bath-toilet usually has a separate entrance that could later on be closed off and the bath made accessible from the inside.

To provide for the household's needs, all houses were equipped with running water, a major advance in these districts where the village well was traditionally the source of any water for the entire community. A cement water tank, on or just below the roof, with a capacity that varies from 130 to 300 gallons, serves the needs for kitchen and bath. A short pipe, easily accessible for repairs, connects the tank with sink and faucets. In some districts, a simple and ingenious device, consisting of a heating coil inside the fireplace, provides hot water as well. Septic tank and field were provided for every house.

The general design of the new farm house tended to be square, or nearly square, in order that further rooms could be added at minimum cost. By using existing structural members, in all of the designs followed by the land reform

agencies new rooms can be added through the building of only two new walls and a roof. This is true of both the one-story and two-story houses. (fig. 22)

Water is an eternal problem in southern and central Italy, where annual rainfall seldom exceeds 24 inches, and furthermore tends to concentrate in a short fall-winter rainy season. In a few cases, roof drainage was provided, with pipes channeling rain into concrete cisterns. In most cases, however, either wells or aqueducts provide water for the household.

Since substantial numbers of houses were built, each agency, besides evolving its own designs for the houses, tried to economise by using standard fixtures for plumbing, wiring, windows and doors. Foundations were mostly made of stone fill, while the walls were made of concrete, of field stone, or of masonry. Roofs were tiled, to provide maximum insulation from winter cold and summer heat.

Since it was the avowed purpose of the land reform to provide the new farmer with livestock, stables were an essential feature of the new homesteads. In nearly all cases the stable was designed to be part of the house, yet sufficiently separated through heavy walls and an entrance facing away from the living quarters to eliminate most of noise and odor. Stables were built with stalls to house from four to eight heads of animals: cattle and horses. Floors were sloped to ensure proper drainage, windows were made of heavy iron, pivoted so that they could be opened for ventilation.



Figure 21. Land reform homestead: Murge plateau (Puglia).



Figure 22. Land reform homestead: near Ferrandina (Lucania).



Figure 23. Land reform homestead: Basento valley (Lucania).



Figure 24. Carrescia homestead: pigsty and chicken coop: near Ferrandina (Lucania).

Liquid waste from the stable and from the manure pile is channeled by runnels to a concrete pit, whence it could be siphoned for use on the fields. (fig. 23) ...

A combination pigsty-chicken coop was added to many of the new houses at the time of construction, while some farmers themselves were given cash credit to build it themselves. (fig. 24) Similarly, credit could be obtained for the building of silos or haystacks, although in quite a few districts these were standard additions to the house. (fig. 25)

Bread is an important part of the daily diet of the Italian farmer, and since these new houses were far away from the village bakery, where the women would take their own loaves to be baked, ovens had to be supplied. These were provided for individual homes, but in quite a few instances a single large oven, large enough to hold from eighty to a hundred loaves, was put up, to serve a cluster of four to six houses.

Virtually every house was supplied with a store room, for farm implements, seed, fertilizer, either as a covered portico, or as part of the house itself.

The task of rebuilding existing houses turned out to be as costly as building new ones. Minimum health standards had to be met, through the addition of bathrooms and putting in septic tanks; attics and roofs had to be refurbished; old partitions taken out and new ones erected; running water and electricity had to be provided; stables and outbuildings added. This task was made attractive only by the firm foundations of

these old stone houses, and their "traditional" appearance that seemed to appeal to the new settlers.

There does not seem to be available any indication as to the proportion of the new houses that were built using prefabricated parts. It appears that only one land reform agency, that of Apulia-Lucania-Molise, used these on any large scale: 2,150 units were assembled by prefabrication processes on its territory, representing 12% of the total number of new units built under the land reform program. The Apulia-Lucania-Molise agency used four different systems, of these one, a French system, called the Calad-Bonnet, was used in more than half the total of prefabricated houses. These systems use prefabricated modules of reinforced concrete, lifted in place by special machinery. It seems likely that a more widespread use of prefabricated units was prevented by their higher cost: the unit cost of prefabricated housing seems to be from 25 to 30% higher than that of housing erected by traditional methods.

There are no statistical data available on the average unit cost of the new farm homes. However, several of the land reform agencies published data that provide an indication of the amounts involved. In the Apulia-Lucania-Molise area, the cost of houses built by traditional methods ranged from \$3,000 to \$3,660, that of prefabricated houses from \$3,560 to \$4,550. In the Maremma district, new houses ranged in cost from \$4,150 to \$8,400, while the cost of rebuilding an existing house to current standards was estimated at \$5,430.



Figure 25. Carrescia homestead; owners and silo: near Ferrandina (Lucania).

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In Calabria, building costs varied according to the location of the house: the average cost ranged from \$4,800 to \$6,500<sup>8</sup> on the lowlands, \$7,700 on the Sila plateau.

Though the construction costs of the newly built farm houses appear modest by American standards, the houses are well constructed, the quality of foundations, walls, and fixtures is adequate and judging by the experience of the first ten years, they seem to stand up under use. But to put the building program in its true perspective, these houses must be compared with the dwellings the new farmers left behind when they took possession of their land.

In the great majority of cases, the southern Italian peasant and his family lived in one or two rooms, in houses built of stone in the hilltop villages, in mudbrick houses in the lowlands. If the peasant was fortunate enough to own a donkey, the animal was stabled in the dwelling, his quarters separated by a couple of planks from the family's part of the house. Running water, indoor plumbing, electric lights were unknown. Water was brought from the village well by the women, carried in large urns on their heads; outhouses provided the only form of plumbing; kerosene lamps or candles, the only light. The women cooked over small fires, lit on an indoor open fireplace, using twigs and small branches they gathered in the fields and along the roads. At night, the village was plunged into darkness soon after sundown, with the village inn and a few stores or public offices standing out as the only pinpoints of light.

Parents, children, relatives, household animals, they all lived together in their ramshackle dwellings, in one or two rooms, devoid of the most elementary comforts. The new farm house, with separate bedrooms, running water, electric lights installed soon after the farm family moved in, separate stable and outbuildings for livestock, meant a new life and unaccustomed luxuries. The transition between the old and the new life was not easy, and one can argue that in some cases at least, the new farmer preferred the accustomed setting of the old house, in the familiar village, to the relative isolation and loneliness of the new farmstead. Certainly there have been assignees who never moved out to the new farm house, while others gave up their house and went back to the village. But the majority stuck it out.

One firm proof of the will of many a new farmer to make a head start in these unaccustomed surroundings was the way in which they undertook to improve the new house and add new structures to the farmstead. In areas where the aqueducts were to provide running water and, for a variety of reasons, the aqueducts were built but there was no water in them for long periods of time, the assignees went ahead, dug wells, installed a small gasoline motor, and pumped their own water for household use and for irrigation. The land reform agency, in most instances, built a chicken coop-pigsty for the farmstead, but silos and other storage buildings were not considered essential. A substantial number of assignees requested small loans from the land reform agency and built these

essential storage structures themselves.

All in all, there cannot be any doubt but that the building program represented a giant step forward in the life of virtually every one of the new farmers. At the same time, the new houses introduced a new element in the long-established landscape of southern Italy, the isolated farmstead. The fact that building the houses themselves was not enough cannot be ascribed entirely to the well-known tendency of men who benefit from government largesse to grumble and ask for more. Living out in the open country, the farmer and his family did lack certain services that they could count on even in the dire poverty of south Italian villages. The women wanted to attend church, the men missed their cronies and the customary evening glass of wine in the village inn. Staples had to be bought somewhere, and the children, at least the younger ones, had to go to school. The need for rural service centers was a real one, as had already been recognized during the inter-war years when the National Foundation for War Veterans first engaged in the experiment resettling farmers on isolated farmsteads. (see p.25) While completing the program of building houses for the assignees, the land reform agencies at the same time turned to the task of designing and building rural service centers, in their respective areas.

The service centers were designed to fulfill certain of the functions of the traditional village. They have to provide administration, through a township office, post and police offices; education, from kindergarten through the

elementary grades; public health services, through a dispensary-outpatient clinic; and at the same time serve as a social center for a group of farms.

The service centers, in Italian borghi di servizio, were located as close to the center of a cluster of new farms as possible. They either were on an arterial road, or within the shortest possible distance of it, as a rule less than one mile away, to provide easy and convenient access at all times to the arterial road network. Even at some little distance, they are easy to identify, by the church and its bell tower that are part of every center.

The service center of Conca d'Oro, "The Golden Shell", located about three miles from the Ionian Sea, in Apulia, is typical of the smaller centers throughout the land reform areas (fig. 26). It is built around a rectangular piazza, dominated by the small church, with its bell tower. On the western side of the piazza, (fig. 27) a row of low buildings houses a general store, a café, where the farmers' club has its meeting room, and where the men congregate evenings, drinking wine and watching television programs on the set in the main room. On the east side, (fig. 28) a two-story building is occupied by a small post office, and the offices of the land reform agency. The church is on the north side of the piazza, (fig. 29) with the parish residence that is part of the building. Slightly to the east of it, separated from the church by a playground, is the school, with two rooms for the elementary grades, first through sixth, one



Fototeca - Ente Riforma - Bari

Figure 26. Conca d'Oro service center (Puglia)--courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.



Figure 27. Conca d'Oro service center: shops.



Figure 28. Conca d'Oro service center: post office and agency quarters.



Figure 29. Conca d'Oro service center: church.

one room for kindergarten, and a one bedroom-sitting room-kitchen apartment for the grade school teacher.

The "Conca d'Oro" service center was built to serve the needs of a community of new farmers, in an area that was easily accessible long before the land reform agency began its settlement program. An example of the service centers built in a district where roads were virtually unknown before 1950 is the center of Sant'Anna-Capo Rizzuto, in Calabria, on a peninsula jutting into the Ionian Sea. This district of Calabria is called the Marechesato, and comprises the foothills of the Sila plateau and coastal lowlands along the Ionian Sea.

The peninsula where the Sant'Anna service center now stands was an open, windswept expanse of plains and low hills in 1950. Parts of the land were planted in wheat, bringing in a miserably small crop that did not always assure the peasant households even of their average annual cash income of \$150. Large parts of the land have been subject to erosion of the most severe sort, and the clayey hillsides and deep ravines looked like a landscape of the moon. Of the two villages of the area, one Cutro, was on the state highway; the other, Capo Rizzuto, could be reached only by a dirt road that was often impassable during the winter. An outlying hamlet of the village of Capo Rizzuto, the fishermen's settlement of Le Castella on the seashore, had only a mule track to connect it with the main settlement, six miles away. Until the 1950's, people who died in that

tiny settlement during the winter were taken out to sea in a barge, and thrown in the water, since there was no way of getting the body to the village cemetery. In the main settlement of Capo Rizzuto, there was a telephone at the post office and at the police station, but none of the hovels that made up the village had electric light or water. In the other, bigger village of Cutro, with a population of nine thousand, there was one fountain for the entire settlement.

The service center of Sant'Anna, with its neat white-washed buildings, is surrounded by some 150 new farms that were established in the early 1950's by the Sila Agency. This is where the Italian land reform really began, for the village of Melissa, locale of the land seizure incident that triggered directly the passage of the land reform act of 1950 (see p.55) is less than twenty miles away to the north. The local manager of the Sila Agency estimates that the center has a service radius of about 2.5 miles.

The buildings of the service center cluster around the church and its tower. (fig.30) Adjacent to the church is a two-story building, with the parish office and a Sunday school room downstairs, a two-bedroom apartment for the parish priest upstairs. The school has three rooms for grade school and kindergarten, a small office, an upstairs apartment for the teacher, and a playground.

The outpatient clinic consists of a suite of waiting room, examining room, surgery, and office and quarters for



Figure 30. Borgo Sant'Anna, near Isola Capo Rizzuto (Calabria).

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the visiting physician or midwife, should they spend the night at the center. The doctor comes three times a week, the midwife usually once, unless there is immediate need for their services.

The public services building has offices for the land reform agency, and an upstairs, two-bedroom apartment for the resident farm expert; an office of the farmers' cooperative; a small post office; and a four-room suite for the carabinieri, the para-military police.

There is also a building for shops and for artisans, who provide shoerepairs, machine and tool service, and the like. This two-story building consists of four separate, two-floor units, two each for stores and for services. Each unit has a downstairs room, and an upstairs apartment, the two connected by an inside staircase.

Borgo Sant'Anna brought many innovations to what was once a district almost cut-off from the rest of the country. When the land reform agency crews built roads and strung wires for electric power, and extended the new aqueduct into the district, running water and electricity transformed the lives of everyone, even though the older houses in the village did not directly benefit from these services of modern technology that are taken for granted in other, more fortunate parts of Italy. Le Castella, the fishermen's hamlet that once lived in total isolation, now has a café with electric lights and the ever-present television set, and an all-weather road that links it, like an umbilical cord, with the rest of the world.

The experience of the National Foundation for War Veterans had shown that the service centers tended to grow, to add to their original functions others characteristic of private enterprise rather than state planning. As businessmen and artisans came to settle in the borghi, they built their shops and living quarters, and farmers who preferred life in a settlement cluster to the loneliness of the isolated farmstead came to the service center, too. Thus a more complex organism came into being, the residential center, in Italian borgo residenziale, that no longer conformed to the model designed by the land reform agency, and began to lead a life of its own.

High on the Sila plateau of Calabria, the service center of Germano (fig.31) furnishes an excellent example of the beginnings of a residential center. It was in Borgo Germano that the then Prime Minister, de Gasperi, turned the first handful of earth, that marked the beginning of the land reform. Germano center, at an elevation of 4,134 feet, is one of the highest settlements of southern Italy. Surrounded by the forests of oak, beech and pine of the Sila plateau, it is a pleasant and restful place, where the nights tend to be cool even in mid-summer when the neighboring lowlands swelter in heat. Though Germano serves only 55 families, a total of 280 people, it is more elaborate than the average service centers, because of the greater complexity of its functions.

In addition to the standard features of the service centers: church and parish house, kindergarten-schoolhouse,

cooperative office, Germano has a public building, a rather large, two-story structure, that houses a variety of functions. One half of the building contains the township office, post office, outpatient clinic and doctor's quarters. Another part houses a small general store, with an upstairs apartment for the storekeeper. The other half of the building is an inn, with seven pleasant guest rooms upstairs, a small restaurant and café downstairs, and quarters for the innkeeper.

The Sila plateau has never been as popular with Italian tourists as it deserves. Its great forests, the lakes formed by two large hydro-electric installations, possibilities for hiking and horseback riding, and above all its cool nights in a part of Italy known for its summer heat, provide an attractive setting for the development of the resort industry. It was the intention of the Sila Agency to provide an inn at Germano, a new settlement, easily reached by bus from the nearest railroad terminal, at Camigliatello, sixteen miles away. Adding the small inn, the land reform agency took a symbolic step, providing a new function for the service center that was to bring new revenue to the area, and increase employment opportunities for its people.

Each of the land reform agencies developed its own style and put into practice its own ideas as to the architectural features and general appearance of the service centers within its jurisdiction. One of the most striking of these is the Borgo Otto Mila, located on the midst of the former lake basin of the Fucino. Reclaimed in the 19th century, when the waters

of the lake were drained (see p.66), the entire fertile plain was the property of Prince Torlonia. The land was rented to the peasants of the nearby villages, in tiny parcels, but no one was allowed to build a permanent dwelling on the land. Tiny shacks sprang up, where people would spend the night during the seasons when the land had to be cultivated, or the harvest brought in, but these hovels, made of mud-brick, with a roof that would hardly keep out the rain, were only suffered by the landlord, and often torn down when a man's lease on his tiny parcel ran out.

When the Torlonia estate was expropriated, in 1951, plans were laid to build permanent service centers on the plain, using land that was too waterlogged to be of much use for crops. The center called Otto Mila was one of these, and its handsome church and school, as well as multiple apartments for assignees who own farms in the vicinity (figs. 32,33,34) introduced a new element in a landscape that, before the land reform consisted of open fields, roads, and canals with long lines of willows and poplars planted along their edge. Before the land reform, the peasants who rented Prince Torlonia's land squatted, like frogs, in their ancient, tumbledown villages around the edges of the lake plain. Today some of them at least, are able to live within not more than two miles of their farms, in such centers as Borgo Otto Mila.

Several hundred miles south of the Fucino Basin, on the shores of the Ionian Sea in Lucania, stands the service center of Policoro that, in 1959, became the first new township,

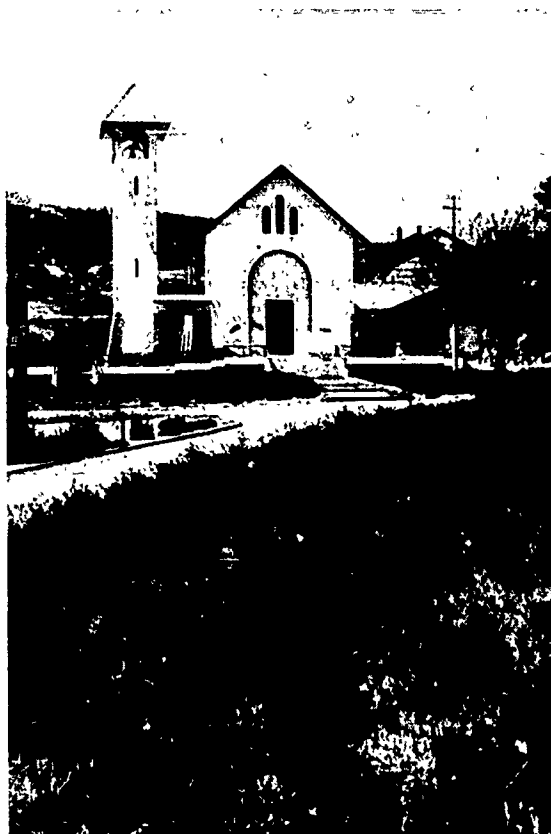


Figure 31. Borgo Germano, Sila plateau (Calabria).



Figure 32. Borgo Otto Mila (Fucino): church.

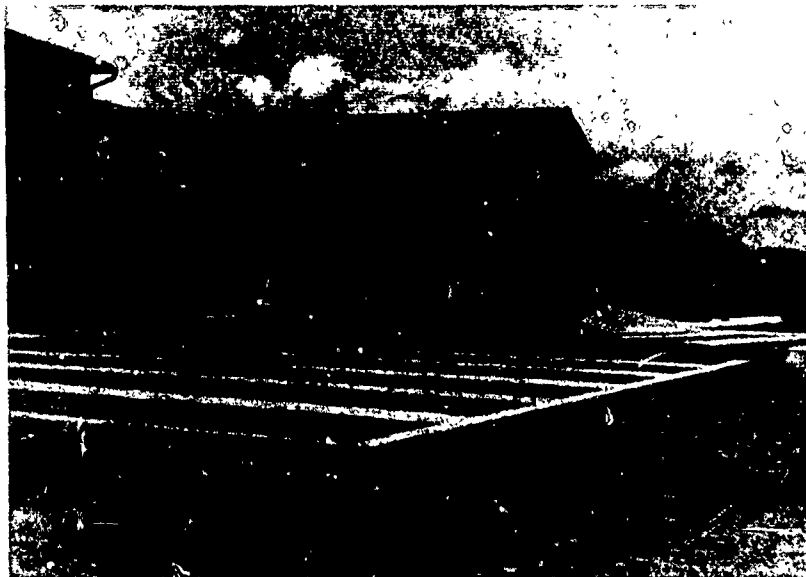


Figure 33. Borgo Otto Mila: school.



Figure 34. Borgo Otto Mila: new housing.

comune, to be created within any of the land reform areas. Policoro is representative of the problems that the land reform faced, of the methods employed by the reform agencies, and of some of the successes and shortcomings of the program.

The township of Policoro started as a service center for the new farms carved out of the former estate of Baron Berlinghieri, on the coastal plain of Lucania. To the north of it rise the eroded hills of Lucania, to the south, barely a mile away are the sandy beaches of the Ionian Sea. Two thousand six hundred years ago, this coastal plain was part of the Greater Greece, a region noted for its fertile fields of wheat, its olive groves and orchards, its forest-clothed hills, its prosperous cities and towns. One of the earliest documents of land tenure on Italian soil, the Eraclea inscription (6th century B.C.) was found here; it is a contract between landowner and sharegrower, written in the Doric dialect, that furnishes proof of the well-established farm economy that flourished in this area in Greek times.

After the Roman conquest of south Italy, and the decline of the Greek cities of Lucania, the yeoman farmers' lands were taken over by great estates, to be worked by slave labor. The streams from the Appenines were earlier controlled by dikes, but these were no longer maintained, periodic floods carried much of the topsoil away, and created marshy, waterlogged conditions. Malaria became endemic and people were no longer willing to live on the plains. Whole towns and

villages were abandoned, and the inhabitants fled to the hills overlooking the coast, to build new villages beyond the reach of the malarial mosquito and of pirate raids that plagued the coast.

Medieval efforts to resettle the coast failed, and so did those of the Bourbon kings of Naples in the 17th and 18th centuries. The area where the Policoro project is being developed was covered by the bushy tangled *maquis*, interrupted only by a few small fields of wheat. As recently as 1950, a large part of the Berlinghieri estate around Policoro was used only as a hunting preserve. The settlement of Policoro itself consisted of the Berlinghieri castle and a group of tumbledown shacks built at the foot of the castle, housing day laborers who worked on the fields of the estate. (fig. 35)

In 1951, 5,624 hectares were expropriated under the land reform program, that formerly were part of the Berlinghieri estate. On that land, 615 new farms were created, totalling 3,530 hectares, the rest being devoted to reforestation and communal pasture. On the new farms, besides the traditional crop of wheat, citrus fruit, tobacco, sugar beets, fruit and flowers are now raised. Each farm family has a few heads of cattle, and raises chickens, turkeys, rabbits and pigs, partly for their own larder and partly for sale. In 1954, three years after the first assignees were settled in their new homes (fig. 36), a private corporation, taking advantage of the government subsidy and tax privileges accorded to new industries



Figure 35. Old Policoro: huts for laborers (Lucania).



Figure 36. New Policoro: land reform homestead (Lucania).



Figure 37. New Policoro: view of the town and district (Lucania).

established in southern Italy, built a large sugar mill. It uses the beets grown in the district, sells the by-products to the farmers for fodder, and employs a small labor force recruited entirely within the district.

The old Berlinghieri castle still stands on its hill-top, overlooking the coastal plain, the railroad, and the national highway that follows the Ionian coastline. The old shacks in its shadow are still occupied, but less than a hundred yards away the new town of Policoro has come into being. From a service center it has grown into a residential center, and to its original functions defined by government policy, private enterprise has lately been added. There are stores and restaurants, a small inn and a movie theater, and looking out from the church tower, one sees the new farmsteads stretching into the nearby plain. (fig. 37)

In November of 1959, Policoro was put to a severe test. During an autumn rainstorm, the equivalent of nearly two-thirds of local average annual rainfall fell in the space of thirty-six hours. The torrential streams that tumble down the Appennine slopes towards the Ionian Sea overflowed their banks and started rampaging over fields, olive and citrus groves, and orchards. Just as soon as the rains stopped, a southeasterly wind began to pile up seawater against the rivermouths, and the floodwaters, unable to find their normal seaward outlet, spread over the plain. The greater part of the Policoro land reform area was under five to six feet of water, and farmers from the outlying homesteads had to be rescued by helicopter

and brought to higher ground.

Official figures are not available, but it was possible to ascertain in conversations with farmers in the area during the spring of 1960, that at the time of the flood over 90% of the new farmers went back to their hilltop villages where they lived before the land reform began. But by Christmastime, 1959, most of the farmers returned to their homesteads. In so doing, they made an affirmation of faith, believing that even though much of their work of six, seven, or eight years was damaged or destroyed, they could start all over again, and made their losses good. This is definitely a positive achievement of the land reform, this faith of the farmers in themselves and in their eventual success.

Yet these same conversations also revealed that virtually every farmer who fled in the wake of the flood and returned later did so in the conviction that the government, in this instance the land reform agency for Puglia-Lucania-Molise, would bail him out. This attitude I found firmly rooted everywhere, reinforced by the paternalistic manner characteristic of many staff members of the land reform agencies. In the farmers' eyes the place of the landlord was taken by the government; but while the landlord seldom did show any concern for the welfare of people working for him, the government has to provide help whenever it is needed.

Were one to compare the appearance of the new farmsteads on the coastal plain around Policoro with the weather-beaten low huts, inhabited by shepherds, that are the only isolated

dwelling on the surrounding hills; or set the well-kept, neat homes and stores of the town of Policoro side by side with the grey heaps of centuries-old shacks in many a nearby hilltop village, the changes land reform brought to the old south appear dramatic. Equally striking are the changes in appearance of the fields where the land reform had been active, and an analysis of the new crops and new farming techniques introduced by the reform is essential for an assessment of its results.

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CHAPTER VI

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM:

Changes in the Size and Structure of Farm Production

## VI

The Italian land reform program was designed to put into practice the mandate given by the Italian Constitution of 1948 to the executive branch of the government. Article 44 stated that the law "promotes and requires reclamation, the transformation of latifundia, and reconstitution of productive government; it assists the small and medium-scale proprietor". Transferring land ownership from a handful of proprietors, each with large holdings, to thousands of small owners was only part of the program. Once that legal-mechanical process was complete when houses were built on the new small farms, and roads, connecting them with the surrounding district, when service centers were established to provide the individual homesteads with the necessities of everyday life, the land reform agencies turned to the task of changing the character of land utilization.

The changes in land use that took place between the beginning of the land reform and the 1960's were both quantitative and qualitative. There was an impressive increase in the gross marketable product from the farms, representing larger incomes for the new owners. But there was also a substantial shift in the patterns of land use, accompanied by the introduction of new crops and new techniques, that is changing the aspect of the land itself and bringing about equally significant changes in the attitudes of the new owners toward their farms.

The farm of Michele Carrescia, in Matera province, near the Ionian Sea is a good illustration of the changes in land use that have been taking place in the land reform areas since the 1950's. It lies near the banks of the Basento River, a torrential stream that flooded its valley almost every spring, while throughout the summer only a small trickle of water passed through its wide, gravelly bed. The valley floor was planted in wheat every year, but the soil, depleted of nutrients through the repetition of the same crop year after year, produced a yield that barely represented half of the wheat yields of the farms of central and southern Italy. Carrescia, like most of his neighbors in the hilltop village overlooking the valley, lived in an old, one-room house with his wife and three small children. In a good year he worked an average of 150 days, and had a cash income of less than five hundred dollars, supplemented with wages in kind, flour and oil.

The low income of the valley lands, controlled by a large estate, made them subject to expropriation under the reform laws. Carrescia was one of the lucky minority of eligible, landless laborers whose name was drawn by lot. Thus, before he could move to the farm assigned to him, he worked for the Puglia-Lucania-Molise land reform agency, building roads and houses to tide him over until he could take over his farm. In 1954, his house was finished, and he and his family moved in.

The farm consists of 4.6 hectares, 11.3 acres, of fertile bottomland between the state highway and the bank overlooking the Basento, a river now partially controlled by dams that

reduce the likelihood of destructive floods (fig. 38). The water table is quite near the surface in the lowest part of the farm; there, Carrescia plants sugar beets and tobacco, cash crops that have been producing good yields and a readily available small income. More than half of the farm is still in wheat: the farmer insists that wheat is the mainstay of the farm, and affords a reliable crop. However, on a strip running along the wheatfield, he has put in 120 olive trees in 1954. In 1959, after only five years, the trees yielded enough fruit to press one hundred liters, twenty-five gallons of oil, and now provide all of the cooking oil for the household's needs.

Next to the farmhouse and yard, and along the edge of the wheatfield, with financial support from the land reform agency, Carrescia planted a small orchard of peaches and grapes, with rows of vegetables running between the fruit trees. The table grapes produce early grapes, of excellent quality, sold to a wholesaler, for more cash than Carrescia used to earn in a whole year as a laborer. The vine grapes he presses into wine, the peaches are sold for cash, and the vegetables provide all that is needed for the family table.

While living in the hilltop village, Carrescia could not afford any household animals or beasts of burden. The agency furnished him two cows, a horse, and chickens. After five years he built an addition to the stable, to house two more cows, and several calves that he sells for cash; his wife looks after a flock of chickens and several pairs of rabbits. The

household now has milk, eggs, and more meat a week than many a south Italian family used to see in a year's time.

Life on the Carrescia farm is not yet easy. Though there is a horse for ploughing and heavy cultivation, the farmer, his wife, and his three teen-age children put in long hours of work. But they have succeeded in changing the face of the land that belongs to them: the endless vistas of wheat, the meager flocks of sheep pasturing on stubble, have given way to a varied farm economy that is no longer dependent on the sole crop of wheat. The Carrescia farm is gradually becoming part of a market economy. Cash has already replaced income in kind; animal proteins are consumed in substantial quantity; fresh fruit and milk are available to children as well as adults.

The Basento valley, in Lucania, depended in the years before land reform on wheat as its principal means of livelihood. About sixty miles to the northeast, at the foot of the low limestone plateau called the Murge, in a deep fault valley lies the town of Gravina di Puglia, long a center of extensive animal husbandry.

Before 1950, the people of Gravina worked on the surrounding landed estates. The men assembled, as was the custom in these towns, nearly every morning at dawn, on the town square, hoping that the estate manager would pick them for a day's labor, at wages that would seldom exceed two dollars in cash. The land around Gravina was in wheat, some of it in oats, for fodder for the few head of cattle and horses. But thousands upon thousands of acres were in stubble or rough pasture, for

the sheep that have always grazed, in large flocks, on the estates. Outside town the only signs of man's labor were the stone sheep folds, where the animals would be driven for the night. Transhumance, the seasonal migration of sheep from the low valley lands near Gravina to the distant heights of the Appenines, was still practiced here, as it had been since the days of the Roman Empire. The wide sheep runs, the tratturi, strips of land from 60 to 200 feet in width, followed the roads, and law and custom forbade any crop to be sowed on these strips; they were the preserve of the migrating sheep. Not until after the Second World War did the custom break down, even then the sheep represented more than four-fifths of the local livestock, with small herds of beef cattle, used largely as beasts of burden, making up the rest.

Following the expropriation of the estates near Gravina, the redistribution of the land called for the building of service centers, for the new, scattered farmsteads. "Dolcecanto" is one of these new centers, and Giovanni Rosa's farm of 7 hectares, 17.5 acres, lies less than half a mile away from the buildings of "Dolcecanto" (fig. 39). Of the 7 hectares, three hectares are still in wheat, but three are sown in fodder crops: oats, barley, and beans. About one hectare is in grapes, three quarters of a hectare in olives, and a long, narrow strip near the farm house in vegetables. Sheep no longer dominate the land, neither do the old, low-yielding breeds of cattle. The Puglia-Lucania agency distributed brown Swiss dairy cattle to the new farm owners, and there is a ready market for milk in

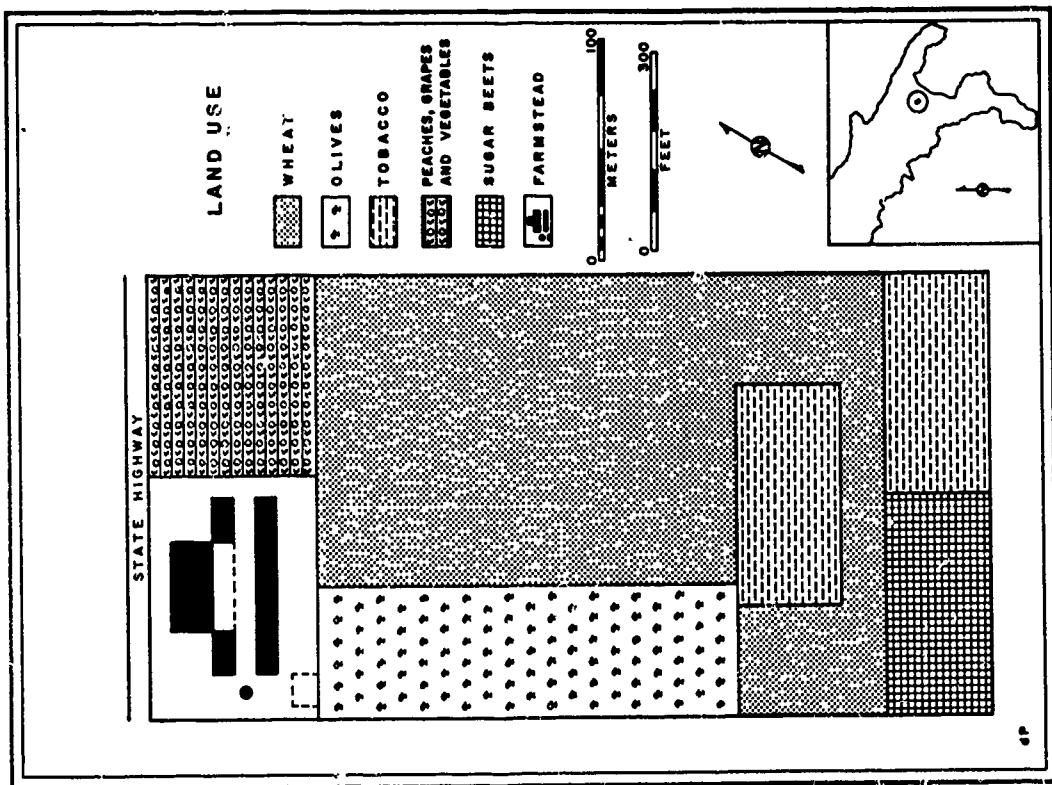


Figure 38. Carrescia farm, Macchia Ferrandina (Matera, Lucania).

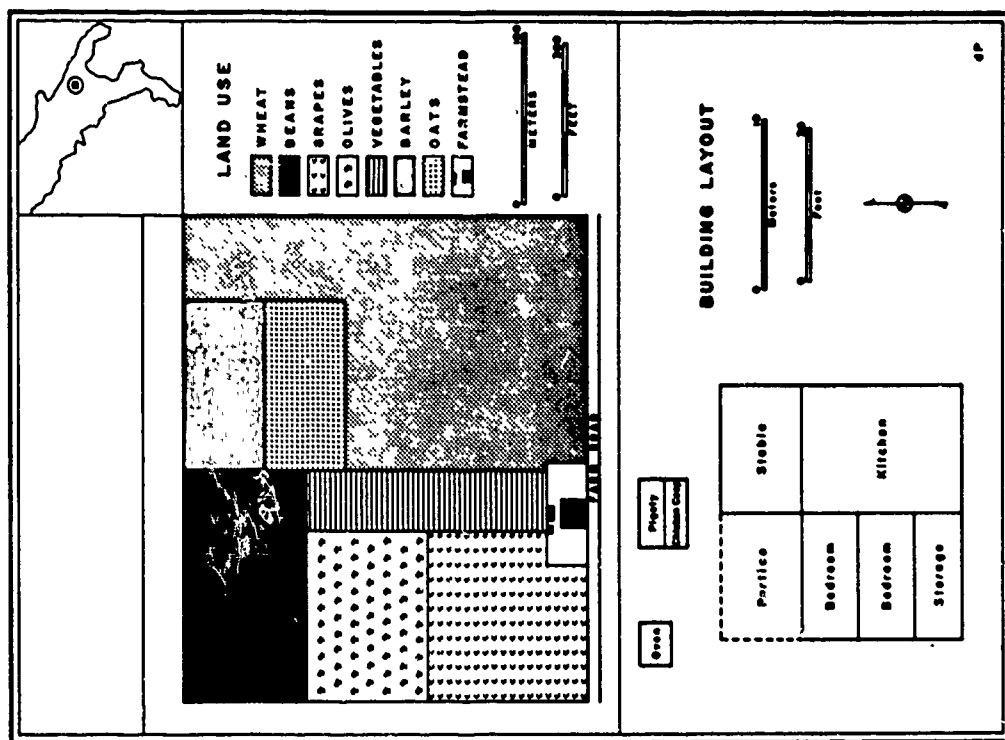


Figure 39. Rosa farm, "Dolcecanto", Gravina di Puglia (Bari, Puglia).

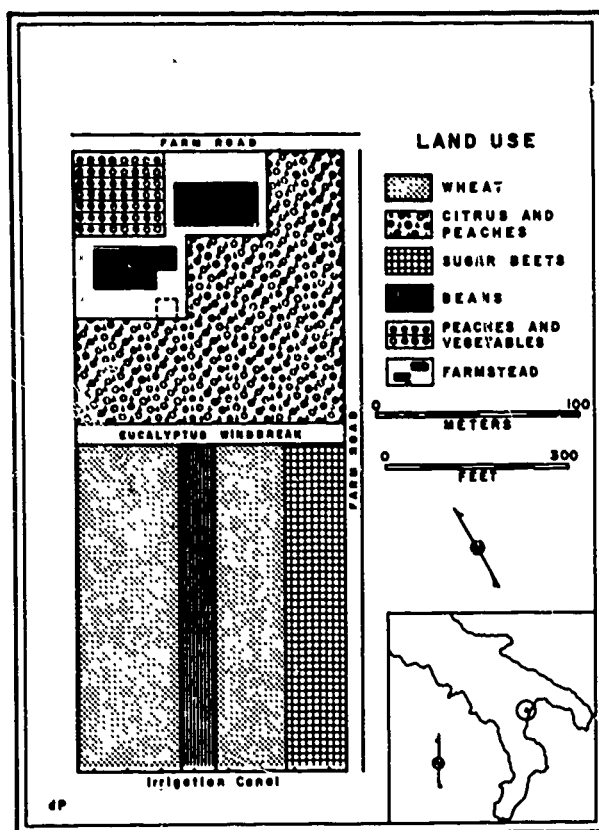


Figure 40. Filomeno farm, Policoro (Matera, Lucania).

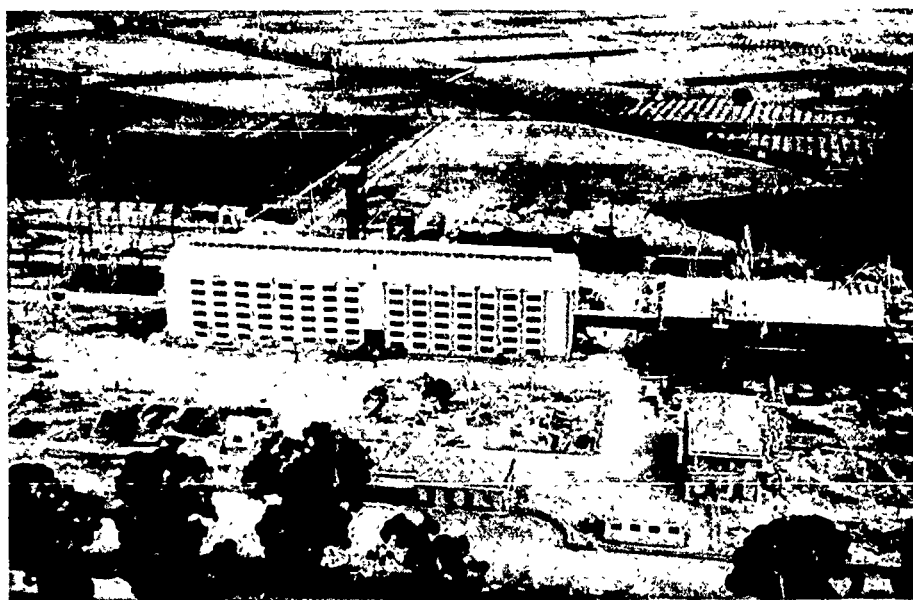


Figure 41. Policoro sugar mill (Lucania)—courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.

the nearby city of Bari. The feed goes to the two cows, horse, and mule in Rosa's stable; Leghorn and Rhode Island chickens are in the yard, two pigs and piglets in the pigsty. The children go to the school at the service center, and the café and farmers' club there provide recreation for the men.

The districts of Gravina and of the Basento valley did, prior to the intervention of the land reform, engage in farming, even though most of it was extensive and low-yielding, and supported people only on the very margin of existence. In contrast, the coastal lowlands along the Gulf of Taranto were a virtual desert for centuries, used only as winter pasture for sheep. Yet climatic conditions in the area are favorable, the hills north of the shore afford some protection from cold winds in early spring, and the temperatures are such as to allow a growing season of from nine to ten months, ideal for specialized crops.

The farm of Rocco Filomeno, part of what is now the new township of Policoro, in Matera province (see p.103) represents a complete break with the past forms of land utilization (fig. 40). On some 7 hectares, the farmer, with the help and advice of the Puglia-Lucania agency, introduced a whole set of innovations. The farm is divided into two parts by a row of eucalyptus, fast-growing trees that already provide a wind-break for the crops grown under their protection: wheat, beans for fodder, and sugar beets that are processed in the nearby sugar mill (fig. 41).

On the part of the farm nearer the house, about two and a half hectares is an orchard, consisting of citrus and peach trees; a smaller patch is given over to peach trees intercultivated with vegetables. Nearer still to the house is a small greenhouse, the principal source of cash income for the farm. It cost about a thousand dollars to put up the greenhouse, but the cost was amortized in three years. Early table grapes are one of the crops produced in it: they are very much in demand in the big cities of northern and central Italy, and are gradually being exported in ever larger quantities to the Common Market countries. When tomatoes are a drug on the market, bought by the wholesaler for seven lire (a little over one cent) for two pounds, table grapes bring in sixteen hundred lire (\$2.55) for two pounds. During the winter, the farmer grows carnations for seeds, and gladiolus for bulbs for the Dutch market, and sells them at an excellent price.

In a district that only a few years ago had an illiteracy rate of about one third or more of the adult population, a visit to such a greenhouse is an unforgettable experience. Three kinds of thermometer and hygrometer are hanging from the walls, and a complete set of observations is carefully recorded, three times a day. The farmer, given a fresh start by the land reform, has in this instance gone far beyond all expectations, and struck out for himself. In a very few years, he bridged the gap from the hopeless poverty of the hilltop village where he was born, to the farmstead on the coastal plain, where the big trucks roll on the highway, carrying his produce to market.

Translated into statistical terms that relate to the entire area affected by the land reform, the gross marketable product increased from 22,417 million lire in 1953 to 93,298 million in 1962, an increase of 416%. Except for 1960, the growth was continuous, reflecting the gradual integration<sup>1</sup> of the new farmsteads into the Italian economy.

During the years 1953-1962, equally important changes took place in the structure of the farm economy in the reform areas. The statistical information available breaks down the value of production into three categories: field crops, tree crops, and animal products. The first of these represents in part the old-established crops of the traditional South, especially wheat. The gross marketable product of field crops grew from 18,611 million lire in 1953 to 53,886 million in 1962, an increase of 290%. Animal products grew from 2,490 million to 23,432 million, a far more impressive increase, of 941%. Most spectacular of all was the increase in tree crops, from 1,316 million to 15,980 million, or 1,214%.

The composition of the gross marketable product provides an even clearer illustration of the shifts in land use. Field crops represented 83% of the gross marketable product in 1953, only 57.8% in 1962. Animal products, 11.1% of the total in 1953, grew to 25.1%, while tree crops, representing only 5.8% of the total, rose to 17.1%.

The Italian Ministry of Agriculture has published information on the categories of land use within the land reform areas, in 1962. These figures allow distinctions between the traditional

forms of land use, especially woodland and grazing land, on the one hand; land in field crops, with or without trees, and specialized tree crops, on the other.

Woodland still occupies more than 5% of the total usable land in three areas of the land reform: in the Maremma, Calabrian and Sardinian agencies. In the Maremma district that hugs the west coast of Italy, in Tuscany and Latium, 9.3% of area under land reform jurisdiction is in woodland, mostly in the hills and mountains overlooking the coastal plain. In Calabria where 7.7% of the reform territory is in woodland, the forests are on the Sila plateau; they are a source of marketable timber and also provide a handsome setting for the cool highland that may well become a popular resort area for much of South Italy in the future. In Sardinia, 15.7% of the total reform area is in woodland, much of it rough and remote forest, more useful for pasture than as a source of commercial timber. Largely because of the presence of forests in these three areas, woodland still occupies 7% of the total land reform surface.

Grazing land is another traditional form of land utilization; it occupies 16.5% of the land reform area. Much of this is land that lacks water, is difficult of access, and is covered by poor soils, land that is difficult to reclaim for more profitable uses. It is of continuing importance in two of the reform districts: in Puglia-Lucania, and in Sardinia.

15.3% of the area of the Puglia-Lucania-Molise agency is still in grazing land. It represents the remnants of what a few years ago was a much larger expanse of pasture, occupying

much of the Foggia plain, as well as less accessible upland areas on the Murge plateau, the interior of the Salentine peninsula, the "heel of Italy", and the Appenine slopes. Grazing land is now the exception in any of the lowlands, and it is relegated mostly to the more remote rugged uplands. There, attempts were made to establish assignees on farms that were two to three times the average size in other areas, up to 55-60 acres. Yet the hostile environment has in the majority of cases discouraged the new owners, and the rate of abandonment of these farms is among the highest in all land reform districts.

The island of Sardinia has been the land of shepherds since Roman times, and overgrazing, steep and rocky slopes, poorly drained coastal and valley lands, have so far precluded any more intensive use in many areas. Almost one half of the territory under the jurisdiction of the Sardinian and Flumendosa agencies is still grazing land, most of it unimproved, and likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.

• Were one to compare the proportion of land devoted to grazing, 16.5% of the total, to the proportion of the gross marketable product derived from animal sources, 25.1%, the value of grazing land would appear far more impressive than is actually the case. The greater part of the value of animal products is from land near the new farmsteads, and stands for meat, poultry, dairy products, rather than for the lambs and sheep raised on these pastures. The high value of animal

products comes from intensive labor input, rather than the extensive use of large areas of unimproved pasture land.

The most impressive results of the land reform may well be found in its successful efforts to increase the area under specialized crops. Thus the acreage in grapes increased from 5,229 to 36,154 hectares between 1953 and 1962; that of olives from 16,940 to 64,399 hectares; that of fruit from 4,399 to 46,974 hectares. It is thus one can explain that tree crops (including the product of vines) represented 17.1% of the gross marketable product in 1962.

Assignees have banded together to form cooperative wineries, and are now marketing their produce under their own label. Growers of citrus and other fruit have formed cooperatives of their own, preserving fruit in specially equipped warehouses, and making strong efforts to bring it to Italian and other European markets, especially at the beginning of the season, when prices are highest.

In 1962-1963, there were over two hundred industrial cooperatives formed by assignees. Cooperative wineries (fig.42), fruit marketing cooperatives, cooperative dairies and flour mills were the most numerous of these, and their total product in 1962 was equivalent to one-third of the gross marketable product of the land reform areas.

If the land reform is to have a lasting effect on the land and on the people who farm it, there must be an increasing proportion of the total output accounted for by animal products and by specialized crops, set against a decreasing



Figure 42. Cooperative winery, Tuturo (Brindisi, Puglia)—courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.



Figure 43. Horse and cattle fair near Borgo Otto Mila (Fucino).

role played by cereals. Even within the relative protection for cereals that is forecast by the farm policy of the European Economic Community, cereals from central and southern Italy are not likely to be competitive with the cereal production of France. The production of early vegetables and fruit, flowers and seeds, must be the goal of the land reform farmers, and of farmers throughout southern Italy.

As for animal products, there are clear indications that the old traditional breeds of cattle, used as beasts of burden and as sources of low-quality meat, are replaced by more productive varieties. Thus in the first five years of full operation of the land reform, 1953-1957, beasts of burden decreased from 43.5% of the herd to 19.2%, while beef cattle increased from 46.2% to 49.3%, and dairy cattle from 10.3% to 31.5%, a process that has led by the 1960's to an almost complete disappearance of the old breeds. The Maremma and Marchigiana (from the Marche region of the peninsula) cattle, large, heavily boned, mainly valued for work, have been replaced by Brown Swiss and Simmenthal cattle.

Between 1953 and 1962, cattle on the new small farms have increased from 12,000 to 137,000, an average of three heads for each new podere. The number of pigs went from 14,000 to 79,000, of poultry from 218,000 to 1,674,000.

Mechanization is proceeding only slowly, and the horses on land reform farms increased from 11,000 to 32,000, with a probable corresponding increase in mules. (fig. 43)

The improvement of livestock has been a joint effort of the land reform agencies and of specialized cooperatives formed by the assignees. In 1962, 172 cooperatives of this type provided artificial breeding facilities and the collection, grading, and marketing of meat and dairy products. Several stud farms were operated by the agencies, and there is a strong interest among the new small holders in stock improvement.

Looking towards the future, one of the most significant activities of the land reform has been the exploration of sources of water for irrigation and the building of irrigation systems. Throughout all of the land reform areas, with the exception of the Po delta, climatic conditions conform closely to the classic Mediterranean type, with the greatest part of rain falling during the winter months, between October and mid-March, and the growing season characterized by long spells of drought. Irrigation has long been practiced in small areas near the coast, and intensive market gardening and orchards were developed on irrigated land.

The latest available figures on irrigation show that, as of September 30, 1962, eight per cent of the total improved land was under irrigation. The investment in these irrigated areas represents 2.1 % of the total, the smallest category of investment in the land itself. Information on the gross marketable product of the area now under irrigation is lacking, but it may be readily assumed that the product per hectare is among the highest anywhere within the land reform districts.

The development of irrigation systems is a costly and slow undertaking, but once it is completed, the results are impressive and long-lasting.

Three of the land reform districts may be singled out as illustrating the techniques used in the building of irrigation systems. One of these concerns the Tara, a short perennial stream that drains to the Ionian Sea near Taranto. The first step in building a major irrigation system using this stream was the building of a plant to lift water thirty feet above the level of the coastal plain. (Fig. 44) The water then enters the first of two distributary canals, moving by gravity flow. Four miles further, part of the water is lifted by a second pumping station to a level another twenty-five feet higher, to a second distributary canal. Together, the two canals serve an area of about nine thousand acres.

Given the mild winters of the Ionian coastal plain near Taranto, it is an area very well suited to specialty crops. In the 1950's, some one million eight hundred thousand citrus trees were planted in the irrigable zone (fig. 45), and production already exceeds in volume the other long-established citrus growing areas of the peninsula that lie south of Naples. With water available, strawberries, table grapes, and a wide variety of vegetables are now grown on the new farms (fig. 46), crops that find a ready market in the nearby city of Taranto, as well as in Rome, and, eventually, throughout the Common Market.

Some four miles west of the zone irrigated by water lifted from the Tara River, another irrigated area was brought into existence surrounding the ancient settlement of Metaponto. In the golden age of Southern Italy, in the days of the Greek cities that flourished here in the pre-Christian centuries, Metaponto was the center of a district famed for its wheat: the coins minted by the city bore, as its emblem, three ears of wheat. The slow decline of the area under Roman rule was accelerated during the later years of the Roman Empire; by the Middle Ages Metaponto was but a ruin, and the surrounding fields were depopulated, infested by malaria and used only as winter pasture for migrating herds of sheep.

Recovery was slow; malaria control in the 20th century brought back extensive wheat cultivation, carried out by large ranch-like estates. The Bradano River that traverses the middle of the Metaponto district is a typical torrential stream; during the early spring it often overflows its banks for a few brief days, devastating the flood-plain, only to return to its narrow stony bed, to carry but a trickle of water during the long, hot summer months.

A major dam was built on the middle reach of the Bradano, the San Giuliano dam (fig. 47), and water is now available from the reservoir that is accumulating behind the dam, for irrigation near the coast. Citrus groves and fields of vegetables receive water both from overhead sprinklers (fig. 48) and from distributary canals; there are farmhouses scattered across the coastal plain, and the Metapontino is gradually

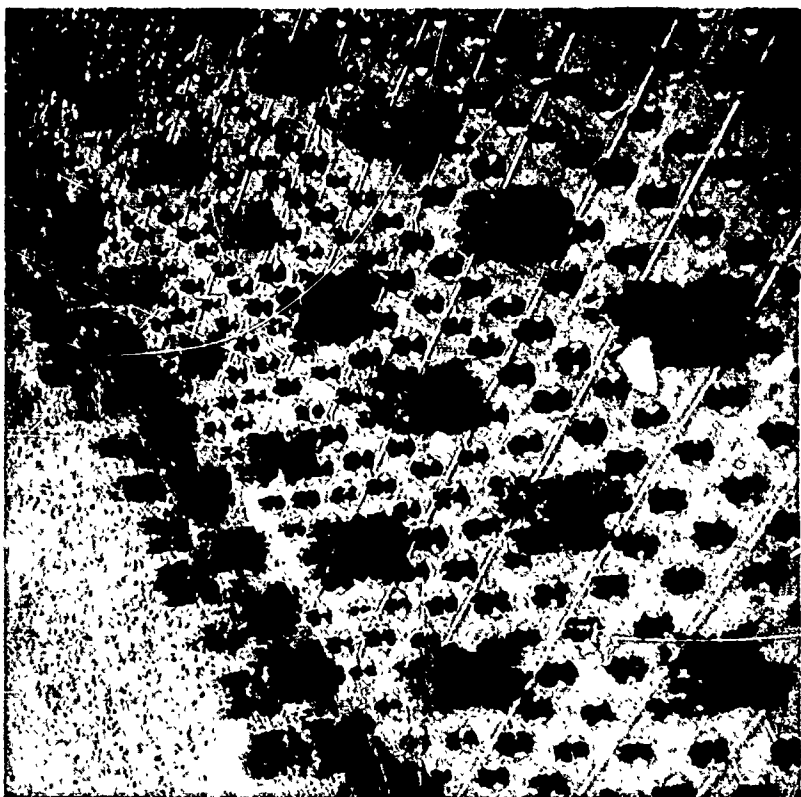


Figure 45. Newly planted citrus grove, near Taranto (Puglia)—courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.

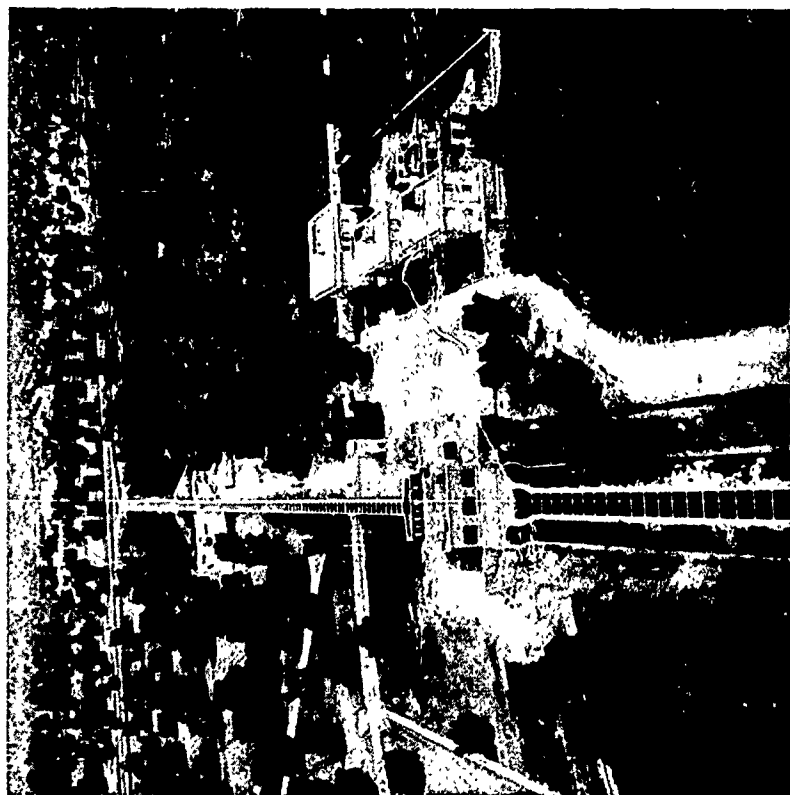


Figure 44. Tara River water lifting plant, near Taranto (Puglia)—courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.



Figure 46. Irrigated farm near Ionian coast (Lucania)—courtesy: Land Reform Agency for Puglia, Lucania, and Molise.



Figure 47. San Giuliano dam on the Bradano River (Lucania).

becoming a significant district for intensive irrigation farming. (fig. 20)

The third irrigation project is being developed on the coastal plain of the lower Volturno River, northwest of Naples. Reclamation of the lower Volturno valley started in the 1920's under the direction of the National Foundation for War Veterans (see p.22); ambitious plans were worked out, a few small pilot projects were undertaken, yet the plan as a whole was never put into effect. Until the mid-1950's, the lower Volturno valley was famous for its great herds of buffalo, and mozzarella, a favorite cheese of Romans and Neopolitans, made from buffalo milk, was its sole marketable product (fig. 8).

The National Foundation for War Veterans did complete one phase of its project: the building of a pumping plant, designed to lift water from the Volturno, to be distributed for irrigation (fig. 49). When the Extract Law of 1950 assigned this area to the National Foundation for further development, the completion of the irrigation system was high on the list of priorities. Distributory canals were built (fig. 50), and several hundred acres were brought under irrigation. Truck farms in the Naples area seldom exceed four acres in size, yet with the intensive use of labor, these farms can prosper. Those of the lower Volturno did come into their own, in the late 1950's.

Fresh fruit and vegetables from irrigated land are sold to wholesalers who truck the produce to the Naples market. But a substantial part of the produce is sold by the farmers

directly, throughout spring and summer, to tourists and vacationers nearby. As part of its extensive public works program for the South, the government, acting through its special arm, the Southern Fund (Cassa del Mezzogiorno), built a new coastal highway through the lower Volturno area, a fast road connecting Rome and Naples, that bypasses the densely settled plain surrounding Naples. Before this highway was completed, much of the coast was empty and desolate, except for the widely scattered ranches where the buffalo were kept. The new road brought tourist trade at first, and roadside stands, manned by the farmers, began to do good business in season. Later, several small coastal resorts began to mushroom, taking advantage of fine and hitherto inaccessible beach areas. The new hotels turned out to be eager to purchase fresh produce, and the land reform farms of the lower Volturno valley found themselves, as other farms have in other reform districts, part of a market economy.

Looking back on fifteen years of land reform operations, the most encouraging feature has been the slow, halting, yet continuing process of integration of the areas of the land reform into the Italian economy. For centuries, these lands provided cash incomes for their owners, absentee landlords for the most part, and limited employment, at very low wages, for the landless laborers who lived on the edge of the estates. In the first stage of the land reform, the agencies had to assume charge of every phase of the daily lives of the assignees. The overwhelming majority of the new small holders never owned

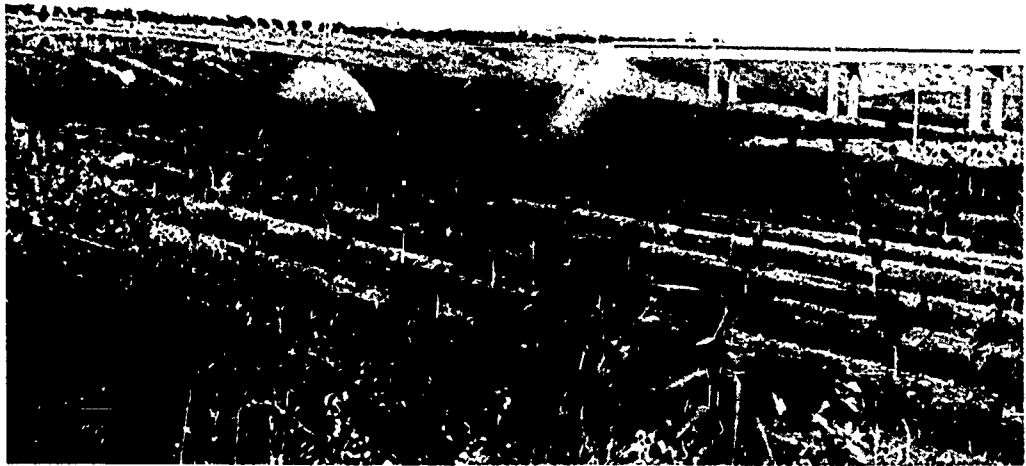


Figure 48. Overhead irrigation, Metaponto (Lucania).

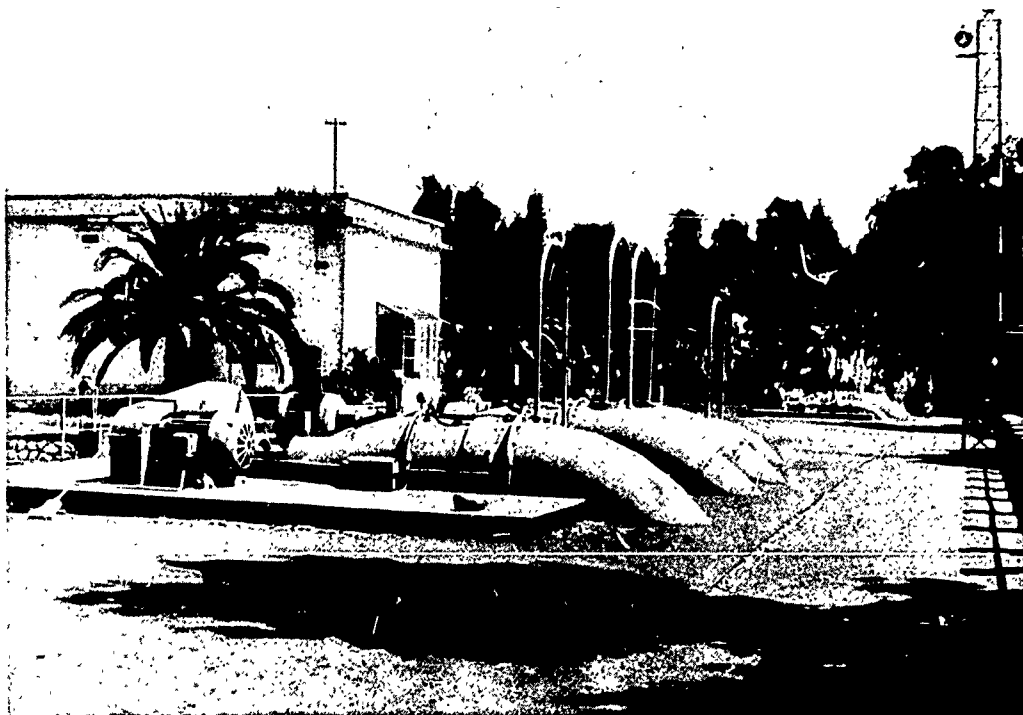


Figure 49. Volturno River pumping station, near Arnone (Campania).

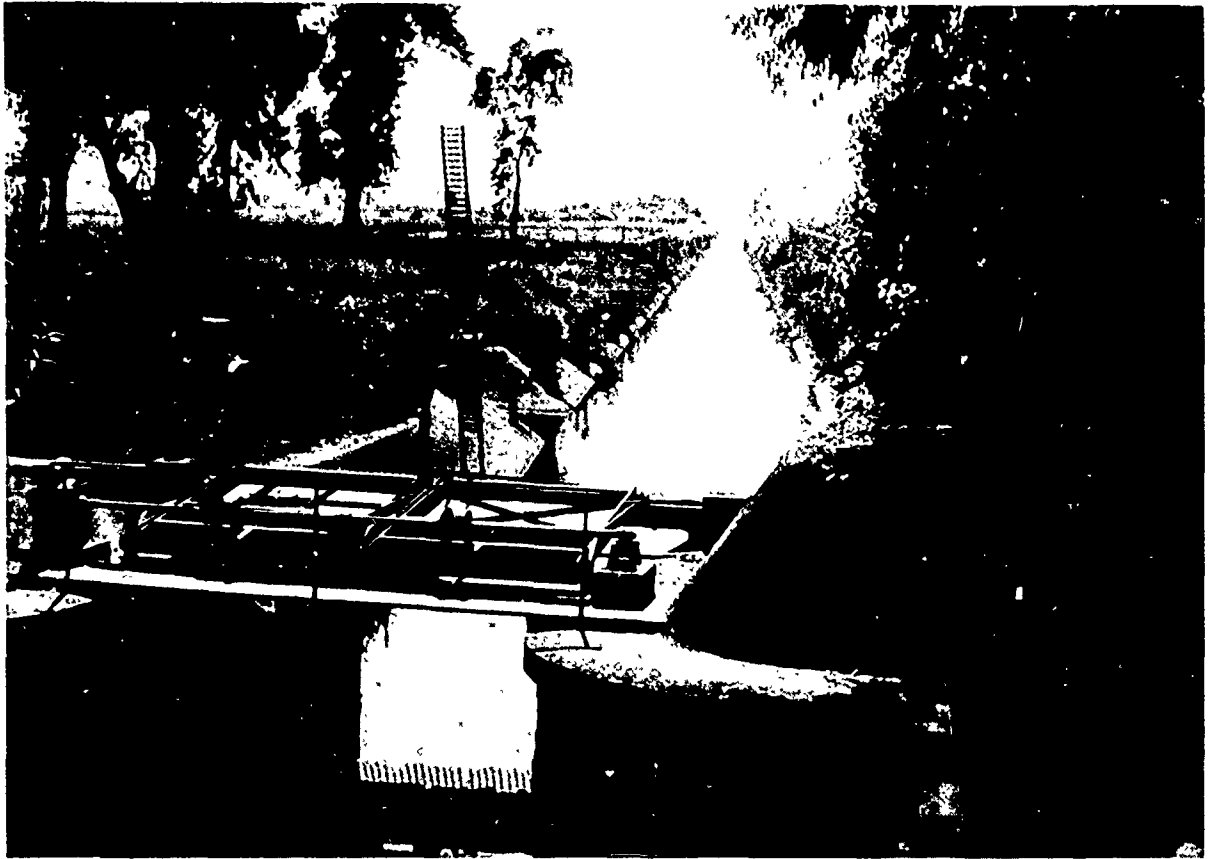


Figure 50. Irrigation gate, lower Volturno valley (Campania).

land; their knowledge of modern farming practices was nonexistent; they had no funds, no resources of their own, except their own labor. The fact that this state of affairs led to excessive interference in the daily lives of the assignees by the land reform agencies was virtually unavoidable.

Over the years, the new owners came to accept their changed position. It meant a change in their attitude to the land, to crops, to nearly everything in their daily lives. Earlier, most of them had cultivated only a small variety of crops; wheat first and foremost, the principal crop of the old South, a scattering of fodder crops, perhaps a small vegetable patch near the village. Now, they are experimenting with new techniques, and trying out new crops. More than one new farmer said, when asked about a crop of strawberries, of table grapes, of eggplant, of artichokes, that he never would have tried it, but for the insistence of his sons. It is the young people, unimpressed by tradition, who were willing to listen to the agricultural specialist from the reform agency, and ready to try a fresh start.

Approximately one-tenth of the amount spent by the land reform for livestock and equipment for the assignees was spent on their technical training. There is no tradition of agricultural extension work in Italy, and while both the land reform laws and the practice of the agencies favored the formation of cooperatives, far too little attention was paid to the education of the assignees, and of their children, in

new farming techniques. It was the desire for amenities, for refrigerators and television sets, for bicycles and motor scooters, for furniture and clothes, that literally pushed the new small holders into experimenting with new crops, building an addition to the stable, a chicken coop, a rabbit hutch, a pigsty; to sell produce, and increase cash income. Thus, by the desires of the new owners, by their willingness to experiment, by their own labor, rather than through adequate technical training, did a good part of the land reform area accomplish the transition from subsistence agriculture to commercial farming, and become part of the market economy of Italy.

CHAPTER VII

SABADI, SARDINIA:

Case Study of a Land Reform Settlement Project

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## VII

The work of the Italian land reform program is being carried out through hundreds of projects, each affecting a small area. But within each project area, governmental action is bringing about significant changes in the physical, economic, and social structure. The Sabadi project, in southeastern Sardinia, is one of these, undertaken by ETFAS, the Sardinian land reform agency; it will serve here as a case study of some of the ideas, techniques, and achievements of the land reform program.<sup>1</sup>

Sardinia has been a problem area within the Italian state since that state's inception in 1861. It is an island, physically separated from the Italian mainland by the Tyrrhenian Sea; much of its territory is mountainous and unfit for cultivation; it had been, for centuries, notorious for being infested with malaria; its economy was primitive, subsistence-oriented. In the southwestern part of Sardinia, coal and metals led to a modest mining development in the 1930's, but everywhere else the island remained the most backward, the most remote, the most isolated part of Italy. It was considered a place of exile by any government servant assigned to serve there; a forgotten island, dotted with penal colonies; a place unknown to Italians and foreigners alike.

Following World War II, several major changes took place within Sardinia and in the nature of the island's relations with the Italian mainland. Starting in 1946, the Rockefeller

Foundation, in collaboration with the United Nations, the European Recovery Program of the United States, and the government of Italy, undertook the enormous task of bringing malaria, long endemic on the island, under control. The task was completed in four years, and in 1950 public health authorities announced, that, for the first time in over a century and a half, no new cases of malarial infection were reported in Sardinia.

This major achievement in public health was followed by two important administrative reforms. First, in 1948, Sardinia was organized as an autonomous region under the new Italian constitution, giving the people of the island a substantial voice in their own affairs. Second, in 1950, the Land Reform Extract Law included all of Sardinia under the provisions of that act to develop Sardinian agriculture. The Sabadi project is one of several undertaken in the Sarrabus region of Southeastern Sardinia.

The Sarrabus region was, until the late 1950's, a wasteland. The western, inland part of the area consists of hills, rising to 3,500 feet; the eastern part, of small, isolated floodplains created by torrential streams, and tiny coastal lowlands along the east coast.

Granite and porphyry are the bedrock of the Sarrabus, covered with a thin layer of alluvial material in the low-lying portions of the region. The natural vegetation consists of thin stands of stone oak, ilex, and stunted pine; and of typical maquis, composed of cypresses, juniper, myrtle,

erica and arbutus, and cacti along the roads. Wild olive and wild pear occupy much of the lower hillsides, Aleppo pines are found along the coast.

Climate in the Sarrabus region is typically mediterranean, with cool, rainy winters and a prolonged summer drought. The weather records of a station located some six miles south of the Sabadi project indicate an average annual rainfall of 714 millimeters (28 inches), but only 92 millimeters, less than four inches of it, falls during the period from May to September. For all practical purposes, the summer is rainless, since what little precipitation falls evaporates quickly and is of no benefit to plant growth.

The prevailing wind during much of the year is the northwestern "Maestra", with a high evaporative effect, while the southeastern summer "Scirocco" tends to dry the soil around plant roots. Windbreaks for protection of plants, and irrigation systems to provide water during the long summer drought are indispensable for any successful farming activity. To offset some of the hazards of drought and wind there is the climatic advantage of a long growing season: given enough water, two crops can be grown, during a season of between nine and ten months' duration.

Land utilization in the Sarrabus region in the past meant mostly grazing: flocks of sheep wandered about the area in constant search of grass and of water, and spent the entire year in the open. Small fields of wheat and barley were cultivated around the villages. The government planted orchards

and citrus groves near the coast, using convict labor from a penal colony established there, at Castiádas, in the late 19th century. The small population of the region was concentrated around half a dozen villages, located near the coast. The rest was empty, lonely, wild country.

Conditions for land reform in the lowland of the Sarrabus region were favorable, for substantial acreage was already owned by the government,--the site of the former Castiádas penal colony--, and additional land was expropriated from large land holdings contiguous with the penal settlement. The convicts were removed shortly after World War II to the mainland and work on the settlement projects began in 1957.

The area of the Sabadi project is 1,346 hectares, 3,326 acres. It is a small basin, about 3.1 miles long and 2.5 miles across at its widest. The land rises gradually to low hills along its western edge, where the highest elevations are just below 650 feet. The greater part of the basin is under 300 feet in elevation, and it slopes towards the north. A small stream, the Rio Perdosu, drains the project area; a low range of hills in the east separates the basin from the sea, forcing the river northward. (fig. 51) Bedrock is granite and porphyry, as it is throughout the Sarrabus region; there are rocky outcrops along the western edge of the project area; sandy and gravelly spots are scattered throughout the basin.

The first task of the land reform agency was to establish a land classification scheme of the project area, as a basis

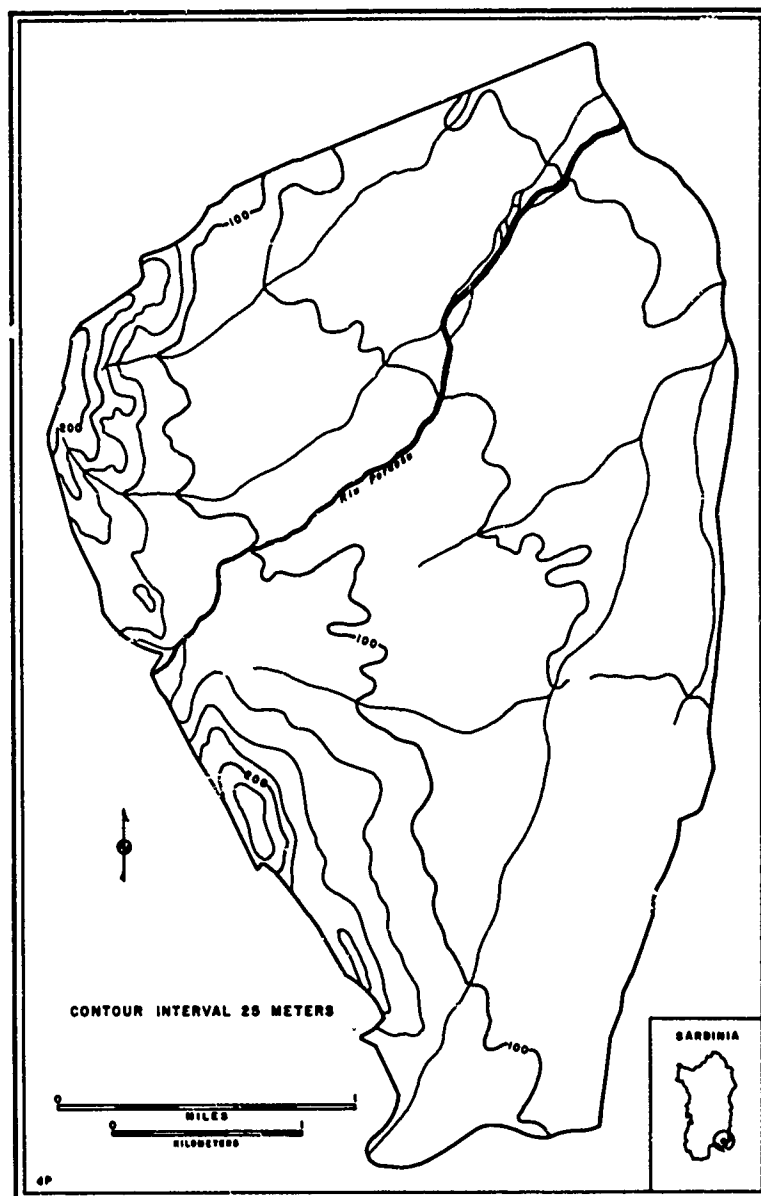


Figure 51. Sabadi project: contour map.

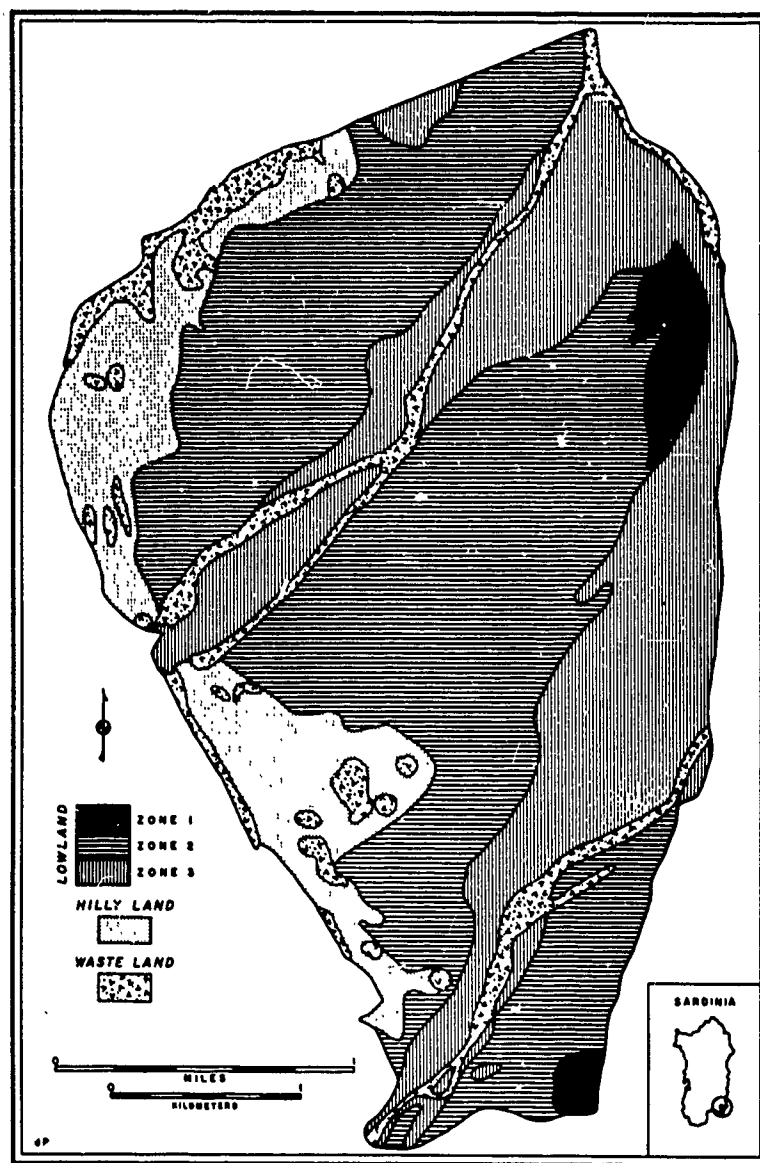


Figure 52. Sabadi project: land classification.

for the assignment of land to the new small owners. The area was first divided into hilly land, lowland, and wasteland, the latter to be set aside for possible afforestation at a later date. (fig. 52) The hilly area covers 220 hectares, sixteen percent of the project. It consists of a shallow surface layer of sand and marl, varying in thickness from 30 to 60 centimeters, with an underlying stratum of partially decomposed, impermeable granitic bedrock.

The lowland portion of the project area covers 1,226 hectares: it consists mostly of alluvial sandy soils, with a clayey lower horizon. These soils are mostly well drained but have been subject to periodic heavy erosion by the small torrential streams that drain towards the center of the basin.

Three subzones were established in the lowland area, each to be developed along distinct lines of land use. The first, and smallest of these consists of two areas, one in the northeast and one in the southeast; the soil is marl and sand, there are few stones and little gravel, and this subzone is of high fertility. The total area of lowland zone 1 is 35 hectares, 2.6 % of the project area.

The second, and largest subzone covers 668 hectares, almost exactly half (49.6 %) of the project area, on either side of the Rio Perdosu, the small stream that bisects the Sabadi basin. This subzone has clayey soils, with a sand-marl surface layer 20 to 40 cm. deep, and underlain by a B horizon, 40 to 80 cm. deep, that is clayey in structure, and contains pebbles and gravel. The soils in this zone have few

nutrients and a low pH quotient, with resultant medium fertility. Irrigation of crops in this zone could be hazardous, since a hardpan could easily be formed close to the surface.

The third subzone covers 386 hectares, 28.8 % of the project area; it includes land on both sides of the Rio Perdosu, as well as a strip of varying width along the east side of the basin. The area along the stream is gravelly to the extent that the planting of orchards appears to be the only way it could be put to good use; the strip along the east side of the basin is somewhat better endowed with plant nutrients, and could be used for field crops and vineyards.

Once the project land was classified, the agency drew up a generalized land use plan. It proposed that the hilly land be devoted to olives and vineyards; the first lowland subzone used for a service center in its northern part, for general farming in its southern part. The second lowland subzone, not fit for irrigation, was destined for field crops; while the third subzone was to be planted in orchards along the river, and used as mixed farm area in the eastern part of the basin.(fig. 53)

The overall settlement plan calls for establishment of 127 assignees in the project area. These fall in three groups, classified on the basis of "working units" per family (see p.72). 97 of the farms are to be assigned to families from 1.6 to 2.7 "working units", 20 to families from 2.8 to 3.7 "working units", and 10 to large families consisting of from 3.8 to 4.5 "working units".

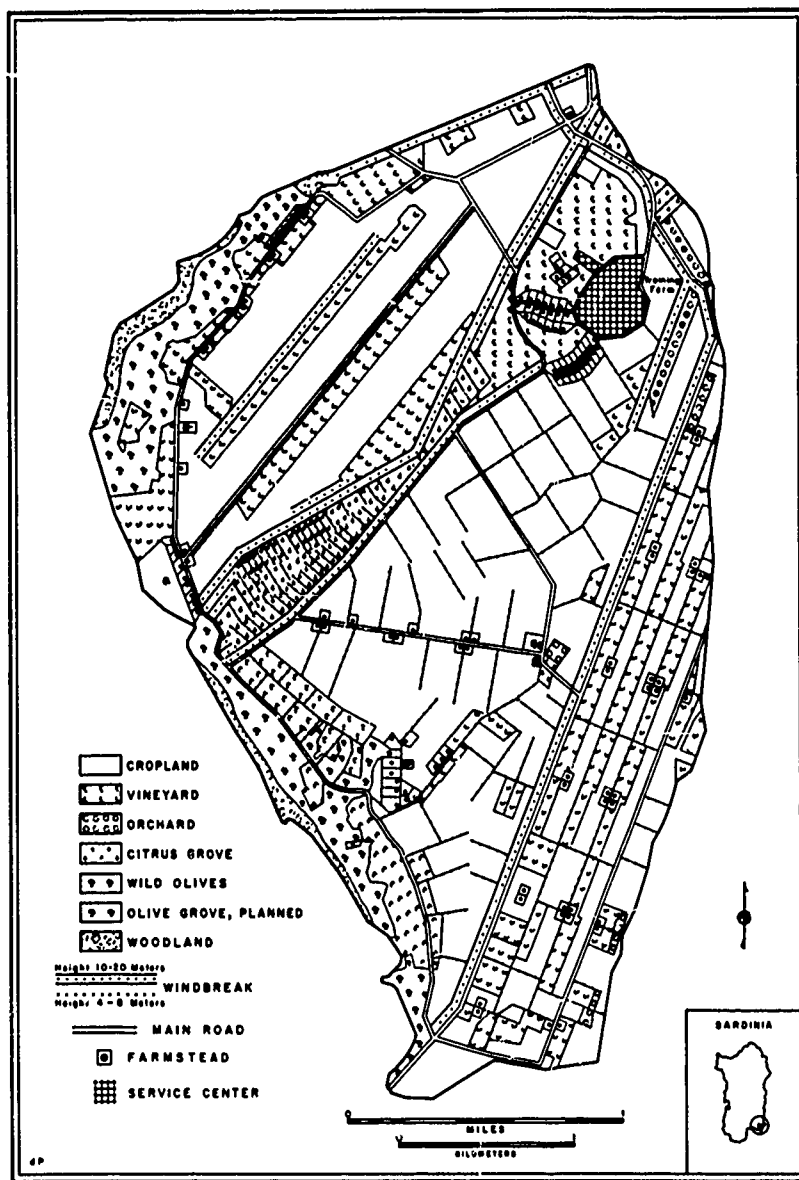


Figure 53. Sabedi project: proposed land use.

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The area of the individual farms ranges from a minimum of 7.2 hectares (18 acres) to 22.6 hectares (56 acres); the few farms over 24 acres include hillside areas now covered by brush and by wild olives that are being grafted, to make them productive once more. The overall average size for the 127 farms is 9.45 hectares, 23.2 acres.

The make-up of the farms, in terms of the types of land assigned to each, varies from zone to zone. In each instance, however, cropland represents half or more of the farm. In addition to orchard, vineyard, or citrus grove, the group of 127 assignees shares with the six other projects established by the land reform nearby, some 3,100 hectares, 7,500 acres, of mountainland adjacent to the project area, to be used for grazing.

The staff of the land reform agency calculated, for each of the farm types, 47 in all, the distribution of land by use type, the makeup of the gross marketable income, the overall expenses to be expected, the farmer's net income, and the feed necessary for the support of livestock. Each assignee was given two or three cows and a horse by the agency, and the annual feed was calculated on the basis of the expected live weight of the livestock.

While the land economics section of the land reform agency was engaged in establishing a land classification scheme, and calculating proper farm sizes, another section of the agency drew up a register of those eligible for land assignment under the Extract Law. First preference was given to men who have

been laborers, or who rented small pieces of land but did not own any land of their own. Under an intricate point system, devised by the Ministry of Agriculture, family size, age grouping within the family, and previous farming experience were all taken into account in drawing up the register of eligibles. As in all areas that came under the land reform laws, there were more eligible persons than land available, and the names of those who were assigned land were drawn by lot.

Once the land classification scheme was completed, the surveys for each of the farms made, and the register of eligibles established, the agency proceeded to the actual work of making the land ready for the settlers. First, the original vegetation, much of it deep-rooted maquis, was removed by means of mechanical devices, especially earth movers and large bulldozers, and stones and rocks were collected from the fields. Besides machines, men, too were used extensively, especially for the labor of moving stones and rocks, and the labor force was recruited from among local men, preference being given to those who were already on the list of future assignees. In this manner, the men who were to settle on the land earned a fair amount of cash, to help tide them over until the time when they could start working on their farms.

After the preliminary work was completed, main roads and access roads were constructed; houses for farms and buildings for the project's service center were built and a basic electric grid was strung. Wells were dug for the new

farms and for the service center; trees were planted; wild olives and wild fruit trees grafted; vines put in; and, finally, the first farmers were settled on their land, in 1959.

On the total project area of 1,341 hectares, land is now used in the following manner (in hectares):

<u>Use of Land</u>	<u>Amount</u>
subdivided into farms	1,202.3
reforestation area (eucalyptus)	29.0
roads (32.3 kilometers)	32.3
access roads (10.2 kilometers)	6.1
windbreaks	16.5
service center	41.4
water courses (13.7 kilometers)	13.7

Land use of the subdivided area, 1,202.3 hectares, fell into the following categories (in hectares):

<u>Use of Land</u>	<u>Amount</u>
cropland	647.3
vineyards	253.7
orchards	10.4
citrus groves	41.9
wasteland	144.5
land in wild olives and fruit trees, to be grafted for production	104.5

Wasteland includes 37 hectares that are too rocky for any use whatever; the remainder represents land used for dwellings

(30.5 hectares), windbreaks, drainage ditches, and canals to be used for irrigation.

In designing the Sabadi project, the land reform agency adopted a compromise solution for the difficult problem of locating the homes of the new owners. The solution advocated by the agrarian experts was to build all houses right on the farm, thus eliminating the waste of time and energy represented by the farmer going to and from his fields. The solution that would have pleased the assignees would have been to build a new village, thus allowing the traditional, nucleated pattern of settlement, and the closely knit village community, to continue. To satisfy both groups, the project was designed to create one major and three minor groupings of homes, as well as a number of scattered homesteads. (fig. 54)

The three minor nuclei of settlements are located, two on the hillsides overlooking the western side of the Sabadi project (fig. 55), the third at the foot of the hills, in the central part of the area. The major nucleus is the service center for the entire project, the borgo "Olia Speciosa", in the northeast corner of the area. (figs. 56, 57) There are also scattered farms distributed throughout the project area.

The work of the agency was done quickly: within two years after the ground was first broken, 81 families were already living on their farms. The major portion of the land assigned to each farm, either immediately adjacent to the house, as is the case with the scattered homesteads, or closest to it, in each of the nuclei, is in field crops: wheat, barley, feed

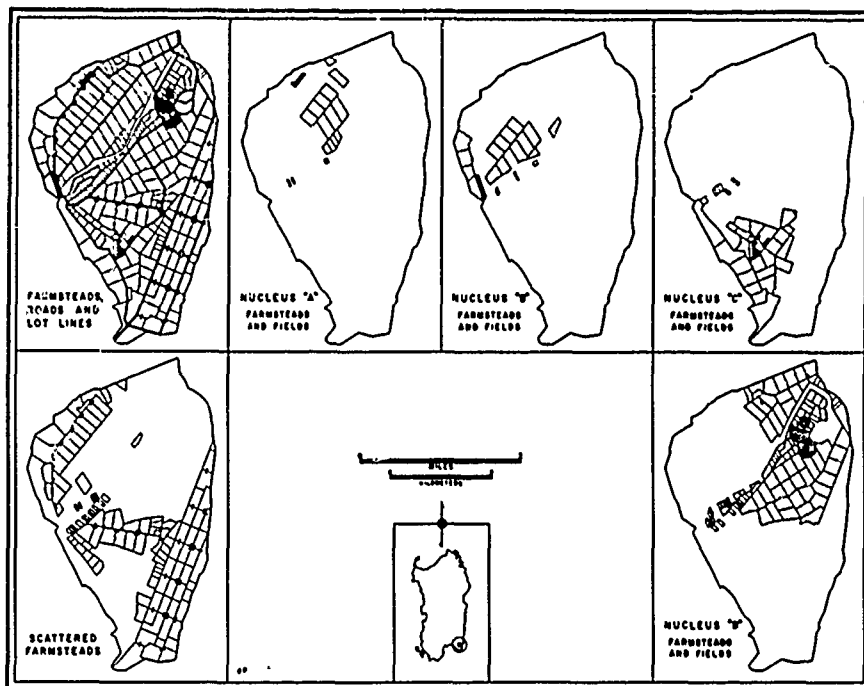


Figure 54. Sabadi project: patterns of settlement.

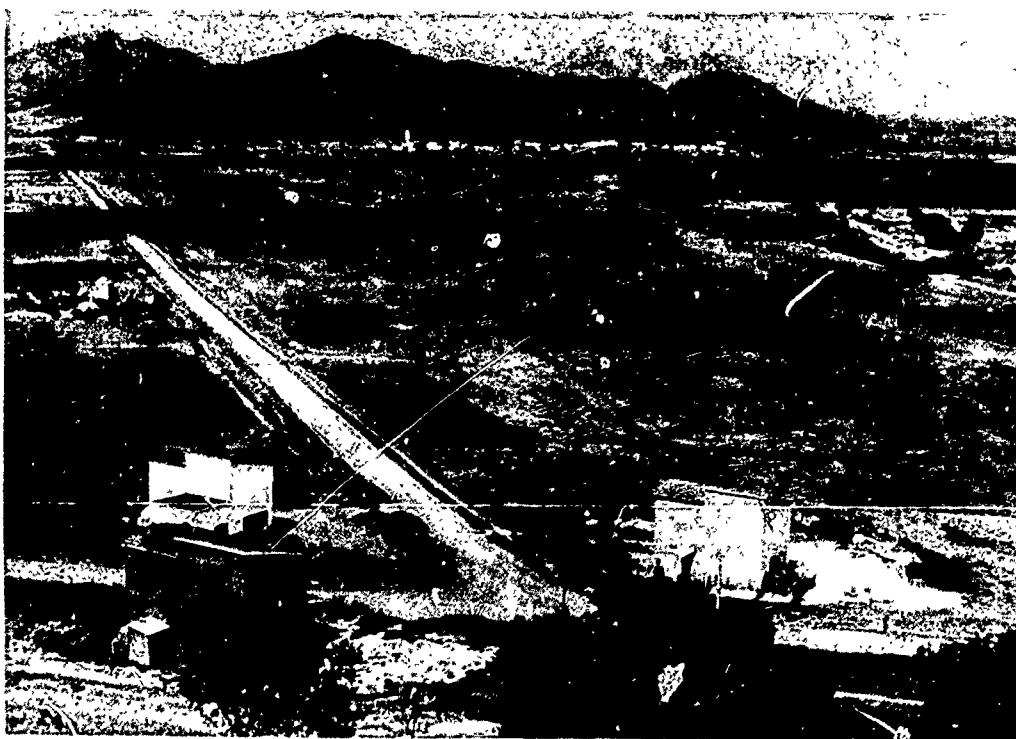


Figure 55. Sabadi project: looking east across the basin, Borgo "Olia Speciosa" in distance.



Figure 56. Sabadi project: Borgo "Olia Speciosa."



Figure 57. Sabadi project: new orchards with windcreens.

crops. The vineyard, part of each farm, usually shares the area nearest to the house with the field crops.

Detached parcels of land, further away from the main part of the farm, include olive groves, orchards and citrus groves. The most valuable land in the Sabadi project is in orchards and citrus groves: the orchards will be located along the eastern edge of the basin, the citrus groves on both banks of the main stream, the Rio Perdosu. When the project is completely settled, half of the farms will have a parcel of the citrus groves assigned to them, varying from four-tenths to eight-tenths of a hectare. Eight farms will have orchard land, in parcels varying from 1.8 to 2.4 hectares and planted in pears, peaches, apples and apricots.

Within the project area, the land reform agency planted 1,270,000 grape vines, 25,000 olive trees, 4,200 orange trees, 8,300 tangerine trees, 5,200 fruit trees, and grafted about 2,000 wild olives. Further, it is planned to plant olives and almonds on some of the hillsides now covered by wild olives.

Water for irrigating orchards and citrus groves is provided by a small earthen dam, by several deep wells and by a dozen small natural springs.

The visitor to the Sabadi project is bound to be impressed with the changes wrought in the space of a few years by the land reform. The mâquis has disappeared, in its place are carefully laid out orchards and fields (fig. 57). The neat houses of the assignees, scattered across the basin, and grouped in the

nuclei (fig. 58) are surrounded by vegetable plots and chicken runs. The buildings of the "Olia Speciosa" service center provide education, a place for worship, consumer goods, technical advice, specialized farm machinery, as well as a meeting place for men and women. The land has been tamed, and put to the service of man.

The rotation plan established for the farms by the land reform agency emphasizes cash crops and subsistence crops in equal degree. The farms produce milk and meat for home use and for sale; grain for sale and fodder for the livestock; wine for the table and fruit for the market.

The Sabadi project was undertaken on a remote and isolated corner of Sardinia. The penal settlement was placed there because the area was far from any road, and accessible only from the seacoast. The land reform agency built roads that now connect Sabadi and the neighboring settlement projects with the main highway that runs along the east coast of the island. It was the hope of the planners that the new road would not only allow the assignees to go to the neighboring village to meet friends and do some shopping, but also to ship their produce to the market of Cagliari, Sardinia's largest city, about 75 miles away, and perhaps even to the mainland.

Looking into the future, if the calculations for gross marketable product and net income reach only two-thirds of their projected levels, the assignees will have a cash income three to four times that previous to their receiving their farms. Further, if the demand for early fruit and vegetables



Figure 58. Sabadi project: looking west across the basin.

in Italy and throughout the European Economic Community maintains its present rate of growth, there will be an incentive for the farmers of Sabadi, especially if their co-operative fulfills its function of quality control and marketing, to expand their production for 'export'.

For the time being, the planners, and the new owners, can look with pride and satisfaction on the profound transformation of this once wild and remote corner of Italy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM AND THE ITALIAN ECONOMY:

Retrospect and Prospects

## VIII

The Italian land reform was an unavoidable answer to a social and political imperative: the need to create a new life for the poorest of Italy's citizens, who lived in the most backward, least developed regions of the country. It was a safety valve, designed to relieve social and political pressures that threatened a disintegration of the fabric of Italian society; without it, open rebellion against the established order was a distinct possibility.

In 1950 the landless peasant of southern Italy lived in a dark and hopeless world of unemployment and underemployment. Industry in southern Italy was limited to a half-dozen urban centers, and could not offer employment to any but a tiny fraction of the unemployed. Industry in northern Italy was holding its own, and had regained pre-war levels of production, but an expansion of production and of employment seemed far off in the future. Emigration to the rest of Europe that, like Italy, had barely overcome the disastrous effects of World War II, was out of the question; overseas emigration, too, was limited to a few thousand individuals a year. If the lot of the masses of landless, penniless peasants was to improve, the solution had to be found within the South, and within areas of similar conditions in Central and Northern Italy.

There were few capital resources available for investment within the Italian economy; immediate industrialization was impossible. There existed, though, large expanses of land,

held by a handful of owners, that could be broken up into small holdings. The hunger for land is part of the makeup of most men who had worked on land; satisfying that desire offered a partial solution to the Southern problem.

By the mid-1960's, the land reform program has completed most of the tasks that were assigned to it by the laws passed in 1950. The overwhelming majority of the latifundia no longer exist, in their place thousands of small farms have been established. The economic environment, too, has changed: new industries have established themselves in the land reform areas that offer employment; new service industries have come into existence, at least in part the result of the land reform. The expansion of the Italian economy, especially in the north-central and northern parts of the country, has been such that there exists a substantial demand for additional labor, that led to a mass migration of southerners to northern jobs, affecting hundreds of thousands every year, for the past decade. There has also taken place a similar economic expansion throughout Western Europe, and southern Italians in large numbers have found employment in the Common Market countries and elsewhere. As a result, the accomplishments of the land reform program appear as one small part of the overall upswing of Italy's fortunes.

To assess the achievements of the land reform program we can turn to statistics that show that the gross marketable product of the areas under the jurisdiction of the program has increased five fold between 1953 and 1964, while the value of

the gross marketable product per unit area, per hectare, has tripled. During the same period, the entire structure and orientation of farming in the land reform areas changed, too. From a traditional, extensive, subsistence form of land utilization, the land reform areas have turned to modern, intensive, market-oriented land use. From the nearly complete dependence on grains and on extensive animal husbandry, characteristic of virtually all of the land reform districts, there had taken place a shift in emphasis to a wide variety of new field crops, new tree crops, and intensive animal industries.

The rapid growth of the gross marketable product is reflected in family incomes that have grown at an even more impressive pace. The laborer or sharegrower who, before becoming a farmer on his own, may have worked a hundred to a hundred and fifty days a year, averaging as little as a dollar a day, now has an income from cash crops that represent a tenfold, or even higher increase in his real earnings.

As the farmers established on their own land gradually increased their incomes, retail stores multiplied their sales and new service industries came into existence, thus adding a substantial amount to the overall product of the land reform districts.

The new farmers have seen their own lives completely changed. After the hardships of the first few years, as their land began to produce bigger and better harvests, they began to strike out in new directions. In many instances, the farmers planted new orchards of olives, fruit and citrus trees; ventured into such new crops as early vegetables, flowers, and

seeds; acquired chickens and rabbits to improve their own household's food supply and produce for the market. They dug their own wells when irrigation water from the government-built project was slow in coming, and bought small diesel engines to run the pumps; they built silos and pigsties, and added space to the stable that was part of the farmstead built by the government.

Above all, there has been a spectacular growth in co-operative ventures. The men who framed the land reform legislation inserted the proviso that all assignees had to join a cooperative, knowing full well that, to the Italian peasant, anyone who is not a blood relative is not a person to be trusted. It may still be early to predict complete success for the new farm cooperatives, but statistical evidence indicates that in such fields as livestock improvement, seed selection, quality control for fruits and vegetables, cold storage and refrigeration of perishable produce, their achievements are greater than anyone dared believe fifteen years ago.

The number of failures among the new small holders has been limited. According to the most recent figures available, 15% of the assignees left the land between 1951 and 1963. The new owners came from the poorest, least educated stratum of Italian peasantry, and the proportion of failures is probably lower than it could be expected. In only one-fifth of these cases was there action, taken by the land reform agency, to terminate the contract with the assignee because of his incompetence and his poor record on the farm. In the rest of the

cases, illness, death, or the offer of a different job, mostly in industry, led to agreement terminating the contract. The great majority of the land that became available in this manner is now once more under cultivation, assigned to a new small holder, selected from the register of eligible landless laborers or sharecroppers.

Evaluating the land reform in the larger framework of Italian agriculture, it must be pointed out that the land distributed under the laws of 1950 amounts to only 688,000 hectares. During the same period land that has become part of small farms through outright purchase, with government help offered through other programs amounted to 1,670,000 hectares, more than twice as much as the land distributed through the land reform program.

This substantial amount of land was purchased by small farmers who were offered several types of government assistance. In the first place, purchases in this category were exempt from revenue stamps and fees for the recording of the sale, from taxes on mortgage transactions, and from real estate taxes, for extended periods of time. The government provided credit facilities, making it possible for small farmers to purchase additional land on a forty year contract, with interest as low as 1% per annum in a large number of cases. Special government agencies even provided loans that covered the entire purchase price, to be repaid on a long-term, low-interest basis.

While these forms of land purchase added far more acreage to small farms than the land reform program, it is only fair to point out that the great majority of the purchases in this

category represent land bought to round out existing farms, and make their operation more profitable. The land reform program, in contrast, drew its assignees largely from among those who owned no land at all, and offered them a life on land of their own. The purpose of the land reform program has to be viewed in this context, to give it its full due.

The achievements of the land reform over at least two-thirds of its territory are impressive. What about the remainder? These are areas of soils so poor that to be made productive requires investments so great that their amortization becomes all but impossible. Other areas lie so far from centers of population that marketing their products is too expensive. Still others have been damaged by centuries of neglect to such an extent that they no longer offer any prospect of rebirth. Much of the land reform districts that lies in mountains or high plateaus comes under this heading: the uplands overlooking the Maremma; the mountains ringing the Fucino basin; the high limestone plateaus of Puglia; the Appennine heights and valleys of the interior of Lucania and Calabria; the dry interiors of Sicily and Sardinia. To redeem these areas would be too costly for the Italian economy in terms of foreseeable returns: their future seems economic stagnation, and eventual depopulation.

It is with respect to these marginal areas of the land reform program that one of the serious shortcomings of the program must be mentioned: its neglect of long-range planning for reforestation, afforestation, erosion control, in a word, watershed management. Statistical data concerning such a conservation program are lacking, but the almost complete

absence of any mention of these activities, essential in a long-abused land, characterized by a poor seasonal distribution of rainfall, torrential streams, and severe erosion phenomena, underlines the need for them.

Connected with the lack of a carefully conceived conservation program is the subordinate position of technical training and agricultural extension activities in the land reform program. Only one per cent of the total investments of the program during the period 1951-1962 is represented by these services, and while this figure is higher than its counterpart in the overall Italian agricultural budget, it is very low indeed when compared with either Western European or American practice.

Most observers of the land reform program have pointed out that the staffs of the several agencies acted as if they had replaced the former landlord, and that paternalism was rampant throughout the land reform districts. The charge, while it may have been well founded in many instances, is nonetheless only partially true in retrospect. Many an expert technician gave freely of his time and his strength to help the newly settled owner, who was often ignorant of all but the most elementary practices of farming. In the early years of the program, a strong sense of direction had to be offered, even imposed, by the staff of the land reform agencies, to get the new owners going, to acquaint them with modern techniques of farming, to get the women to learn about food preservation and a balanced diet. The social workers were faced with the task of overcoming longstanding village feuds among the assignees;

to organize young peoples' groups; to acquaint their charges with the modern medical and social services offered by the Italian state. The task confronting the development boards, as the land reform agencies are now called, is to progressively replace directives with technical advice, paternalistic bureaucracy with forward-looking agricultural extension staffs.

Last but not least of the continuing problems that the program has to face is the problem of agrarian credit. Never too plentiful in Italy, agrarian credit is still not readily available to the small farmer, and if the small holdings settled by the land reform program are to be self-supporting, credit must be offered for the purchase of farm machinery, additional livestock, selective seed and fertilizers, improvement of the land. Some of these needs could be covered by cooperatives, as could those essential services of storage, handling and marketing that Scandinavian and West European farmers take for granted, but the bulk of the smallholders' investments must depend on agricultural credit unions.

In its early years, the land reform program was one of the pillars of the Italian government's plans for the rehabilitation of the long-neglected South. But the program affects less than 4% of Italy's farmland, and could be only considered as a pilot project today. It is now part of a much more ambitious and varied plan for the South. The Italian government, through its Southern Fund, the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, is engaged in a vast investment program, involving both an infrastructure for the new economy of the South, of roads, irrigation, housing; and a superstructure of subsidiary and fiscal

advantages to attract industry to the southern parts of the nation. Parallel with the work of the Southern Fund, private investment, too, has made itself felt in the South in trade, in industry, in service activities. Compared with these, the land reform program occupies a very modest place in the massive attempt to redress the balance between Italy's North and South.

What, then, is the significance of Italy's land reform? It is to be found in the context of the time when it began, the problem it tried to solve, and the methods it applied to that solution.

For the past decade or more, Italy's economy has been among the fastest growing in the western world. At the same time, in spite of recurring political crises affecting the composition of its government, in spite of Communist party continuing to receive the second-largest number of votes of any party in election after election, political stability has characterized Italian political life. It is difficult now to place the land reform in its true perspective, the late 1940's.

The Communist party and its ally, the Socialist party, came very close to winning the 1948 parliamentary elections, the first to be held in the newly created Italian Republic. The country was heavily leaning on foreign aid, most of it from the United States; living standards and real incomes were low, and throughout Southern Italy especially, people lived in abysmal poverty. For years, Italian governments, Fascist and democratic alike, tried to carry on a war against poverty in the South. Yet their efforts came to naught against the strength of the vested interests of large land holders.

Italy was not exceptional in this respect, nor can one say that a land problem, an imbalance between vast holdings in the hands of a few and a mass of people without land and without hope, no longer exists in our time. There was such a land problem in eastern Germany and in Hungary between two world wars; it was solved by Communism, that expropriated not only large estates but abolished private land ownership and replaced it with collective farms. Southern Italy, in the late 1940's, had within it the makings of a crisis similar to that in more than one Latin American country, Cuba and Guatemala and Chile.

The Italian land reform program showed that a democratic government could, and would attempt to solve the land problem, by taking a firm stand against the great estates. There were no land seizures after the reform laws were passed in 1950, the land reform removed the fuse from the time bomb of an extremist revolt.

Financially, the land reform program was expensive. The total cost for the fifteen years, 1951-1965, amounted to one billion dollars, a very large sum for a country of Italy's size and resources. In the long run, the newly created small farms will continue to ask, and obtain, government subsidy, probably in less open ways than has been the case to date. As a pilot project, on the other hand, the land reform program has high value, not only for Italy but for other countries with similar problems of their own.

Under the Italian land reform, only misused and neglected land was expropriated. Land that was properly used, and that supported men in numbers commensurate to its carrying capacity,

was left alone. The Italian land reform's approach was not doctrinaire nor mechanical: it was discriminating, well thought-out economically, while at the same time it responded to the demands of political expediency of the moment.

The Italian land reform program transformed the expropriated land first, parcelled it out into viable farms, built roads and houses and settlement centers, provided irrigation and a modicum of mechanized means for farming, and settled men on the small holdings who came from the bottom rung of the economic ladder. In fifteen years, sixty thousand families were settled on their own land, and a measure of help was extended to another fifty thousand families to round out their holdings into a more economical farm.

Close to three quarters of a million people were directly affected by the land reform, a significant part of Italy's population. These people have become part of Italian society, of the Italian economy, instead of leading a submarginal existence, in hopeless poverty, on the fringes of that economy. To them and to their children, the land reform is a bright hope, the hope for a better future. There is every reason to believe that the principles and techniques of the Italian land reform can be applied to other land problems, under different environments, to give hope to landless peasants elsewhere through this democratic way to a better rural society.

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2. Silone, 1934
3. Kish, 1953
4. Barbero, 1961, 26-30
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2. FAO-Memoria, 1966
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APPENDIX A:

The "Sila" Law

## Appendix A

PROVISIONS FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF THE SILA-PLATEAU AND  
ADJACENT COASTAL AREAS  
ALONG THE IONIAN SEA

Act #230,

May 15, 1950

## ARTICLE I

The Sila Development Board, established by Law #1269, of December 31, 1947, is hereby entrusted with the task of redistributing landed property and of transforming it subsequently, for the purpose of obtaining in this manner land to be assigned as farms to peasants. The territory within which this law is valid is bounded by a line that starts in the south from Cape Staletti; follows the boundaries of the Alli-Copanello district; follows state highways 109-A and 109; thence the western limit of the Sila plateau to the river Mucone; thence the course of that river to its confluence with the river Crati; thence the state railroad line Cosenza-Sibari to its junction with the northern limit of the reclamation districts of Cassano and Cerchiara, to the mouth of the torrential stream Saraceno; thence following the Ionian coastline to Cape Staletti.

The territory thus delimited, whether or not it has been already classified as reclamation district under the terms of the Royal Decree #215, of February 13, 1933, is hereby classified as reclamation district of the first category.

## ARTICLE II

For the purposes of this law all private land, capable of improvement, which is in excess of 300 hectares, including properties situated outside the territory indicated in Article I, and belonging under whatever title, whether in community or individual ownership, to individuals or to business associations, as of November 15, 1949, is subject to expropriation.

The provisions of the preceding paragraph apply also to land rented under the emphyteusis system.

From the computation of land subject to expropriation, properties transferred because of death to direct descendants between November 15, 1949 and the effective date of the present law are excluded.

Land which is capable of improvement and which belongs to business associations may be expropriated in its entirety.

The right of the Board to purchase other land, not subject to expropriation, through authorization of the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, remains unchanged.

The Board may be authorized by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests to exchange land, which it has obtained in whatever manner, with other land considered to be more appropriate for the development of peasant farms.

## ARTICLE III

The detailed plans of expropriation, indicating the amounts of indemnity to be paid, will be compiled within six months from the effective date of this law by the Board. The Board according

to its needs, will prefer in its considerations land being part of properties in excess of 1000 hectares.

#### ARTICLE IV

The plans of expropriation will be exhibited for 25 days by the Board in each township office, showing the plans concerning properties to be expropriated within the territory of the township. The plans will also be published in extract in the legal gazette of the province.

Within this time limit interested parties may request the board to rectify possible material errors.

#### ARTICLE V

The government, acting under powers contained in this law, following the principles and directives defined by this law, and having heard the opinion of a commission, composed of three senators and three deputies elected by their respective chamber, will provide, before December 31, 1951, through executive order for approval of detailed expropriation plans; the occupation, with all possible speed, of land subject to expropriation; and the transfer of land referred to in Article III to the Board.

#### ARTICLE VI

Rental agreements concerning expropriated land, except those concluded with owner-operators, are dissolved as of the end of the agricultural year in progress, provided the Board serves notice to the lessee at least three months before the expiration of the contract.

If such notice is not given within such limit, it will have effect as of the end of the agricultural year immediately following.

The lessee is not entitled to any indemnity because of this termination of contract, except to reimbursement for work in progress, or for whatever other legitimate reason.

#### ARTICLE VII

Compensation for expropriation of parcels of land is commensurate with values definitely established for the assessment of the extraordinary progressive tax on patrimony.

Appeal against such valuation, for reasons provided in Article III of the Act of November 10, 1949, #805, must be presented to the Provincial Tax Commission within 30 days from the notification of value established for the assessment of the aforementioned tax on patrimony. The Provincial Tax Commission must hand down its decision within sixty days.

Against this decision appeal may be made to the Central Tax Commission within thirty days.

#### ARTICLE VIII

Compensation for expropriation is to be provided for by public debt bonds, carrying a 5% interest, and redeemable in twenty-five years.

The Ministry of the Treasury is authorized to issue a special series of such bonds at the time of the first issue of a redeemable loan. Landowners who wish to execute improvements upon land which remains in their possession may request that the payment of indemnity be made in case, but such

payment will be limited to the amount of the work to be carried out, after deduction of state subsidies.

Such payment will be correlated with the progress of the improvement works; however, upon opinion of the board, a maximum advance of 20% may be paid at once.

#### ARTICLE IX

Compensation for expropriation is subject to the rights of third parties including the rights of public use.

Release of bonds and, in cases provided by the third paragraph of Article XIII, payment of sums due for compensation, will be made by means of an order of the court within whose jurisdiction expropriated lands are located.

#### ARTICLE X

Within the area of the law where the new reclamation classification is established by the second paragraph of Article I, the Board may be authorized by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to undertake all necessary works for reclamation and settlement within the meaning of the Royal Decree of February 13, 1933, #215. The Board may be authorized by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to coordinate all reclamation activities which ordinarily would have to be carried out by reclamation districts constituted within its territory. If it is necessary, the Board may draw up reclamation and land redistribution plans and impose upon all interested parties necessary measures of reclamation.

Within the territory described in Article I, the Board has the duty to impose the execution of land improvement on land capable of improvement, even if such land is not transferred to the Board.

The Board must develop improvement plans for all lands owned by the townships.

#### ARTICLE XI

The rights conceded to the Board by its organic act of December 31, 1947, #1620, under Article X, are hereby extended to the entire territory as described in Article I. (N.B. This article provides that if the individual land owners do not carry out necessary reclamation works, the Board may undertake such works on their behalf, and be reimbursed for all its expenses by the owners. The article further provides that if such compensation is not paid, the Board may receive compensation by actual expropriation of part of the land as reclaimed.)

#### ARTICLE XII

Modifying the dispositions of Article V of the organic act of the Board, the Silva Development Board will be administered for six years, starting with the effective date of this law, by a President, appointed through executive order by the Head of State, upon nomination by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, with the consent of the Council of Ministers.

The President is in charge of all administrative matters and represents the Board.

## ARTICLE XIII

The President of the Board is assisted by a council, constituted of twelve members. Of these members six are to be chosen among persons who qualify as experts in matters concerning land improvement and settlement, and who represent the various branches of agriculture; four are to represent the Ministries of the Treasury, of Agriculture and Forests, of Public Works, and of Labor and Social Security; and two will represent local administrations, one the province of Cosenza, and the other the province of Catanzaro.

The members of the Council are appointed through executive order by the Prime Minister, upon nomination by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests.

The Director-General of the board is appointed through executive order by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests upon nomination by the President of the Board, with the consent of its Council.

## ARTICLE XIV

The President of the Board and the members of the Council are appointed for a period of three years.

If there are administrative irregularities or violations of law or of regulations, the President of the Board may be replaced and the Council may be dismissed, even before the lapse of the three year period, if this is proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, after consultation of the Council of Ministers.

## ARTICLE XV

Modifying Article VI of the organic law of the Board, the supervision of the administrative and financial management of the Board is in the hands of a committee composed of three members. One member is a delegate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, one a delegate of the Treasury, and one is a delegate of the state auditing board.

The financial year of the Board begins on October 1 of every year and ends on September 30 of the following year. The budget of the next financial year must be submitted the Minister of Agriculture and Forests during the month of August; the definitive accounts of the previous year must be submitted during the month of March. All administrative measures which modify the distribution of funds among the budget items must be immediately transmitted to the Minister.

The annual budget, with its supporting report, is to be part of the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

## ARTICLE XVI

Land that has become the property of the Board must be assigned to agricultural laborers who do not own land or who own or are grantees of land by emphyteusis land that is insufficient to employ labor available within the family. Provincial agricultural inspectors will determine whether a man qualifies as agricultural laborer and whether he has the necessary professional experience, according to the dispositions of Article I, sub-paragraph A, of the next to last paragraph of the Act of February 24, 1948, #114.

## ARTICLE XVII

Land assignment is made through a contract of sale, the payment to be made in thirty annual installments. The Board retains title to the land until complete payment has been made. The price will not exceed two-thirds of the cost of the land improvement works completed by the Sila Development Board upon the property, after deducting state contributions. Added to it will be the compensation paid to the former owner.

The rate of interest will be 3.5%. The installments will be arranged in such a manner that the two first installments will be only payment of capital.

## ARTICLE XVIII

The contract of sale must include a three year trial period, permitting cancellation of the contract.

Installment payments cannot be made in advance. Until the entire price has been paid, all contracts of sale, rent or transfer for whatever use, of the assigned land are null and void. During the same period the rights of the assignee may not be subject to mortgage or foreclosure unless it is in favor of the Board.

## ARTICLE XIX

The rights of the assignee who dies before paying the entire price are transferred to his direct descendants or, if there are none, to his wife, unless she was legally separated through her fault.

In either case, the heirs must satisfy requirements as stated in the first paragraph of Article XVI.

If this is not the case, the farm reverts to the Board for reassignment, and heirs of the assignee are entitled to be reimbursed the installments paid by the deceased. They're also entitled to compensation for the increase in value of the land as a result of the improvements which the owner had carried out, without support of the Board.

#### ARTICLE XX

The land must be assigned within not more than three years of the day when the board takes possession of them.

This provision does not apply if the land is to become, through authorization of the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, an experimental farm, or if it is to be used by agricultural schools.

#### ARTICLE XXI

The board may promote and facilitate grants under emphyteusis to be made to agricultural laborers, by owners of properties which are below the ceiling provided in Article II.

#### ARTICLE XXII

The board, in order to carry out the tasks assigned to it, must organize technical, economic, and financial services to assist the assignees.

The Board must promote, encourage and organize: a. special free courses of professional instruction in agriculture; b. centers of agricultural machinery.

The Board, furthermore, has to promote for each of the organic units of land settlement the organization of cooper-

atives, or create compulsory reclamation districts which will gradually assume the tasks and the services referred to above.

#### ARTICLE XXIII

For a period of twenty years from the effective date of the contract of sale, all assignees must belong to cooperatives or reclamation districts which are organized by the Board to guarantee technical, economic and financial assistance to the new small peasant farms.

If this obligation is not fulfilled the land assignment may be withdrawn by the Board.

#### ARTICLE XXIV

Payments required by Article VIII, paragraph B, of the organic law of the Board constitute real burdens upon the property of the tax-payers and will be collected in the same manner as the real estate tax, taking place immediately after the real estate tax and the adjunct provincial and township surtax. (This disposition refers to annual dues to be paid by all proprietors towards the operating costs of the Sila Development Board, the amount of such dues to be established by the Minister of Agriculture.) These dispositions apply also to the collection dues of whatever type connected with the expenses incurred in applying this law.

#### ARTICLE XXV

The payment of 15 billion lire to the Sila development board is hereby authorized, to enable it to carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the present law.

This amount will be paid in six annual installments, that are to be part of the budget of the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, in the following manner: 1949-50, 700 million lire; 1950-51, 4,000 million; 1951-52, 3,300 million; 1952-53, 3,000 million; 1953-54, 2,000 million; 1954-55, 2,000 million.

The payment of 700 million lire for the financial year 1949-50 will be covered by a corresponding amount in the first parliamentary overdraft for the budget of the year 1949-50.

#### ARTICLE XXVI

Payments to the Board will be made commensurate with the development of its activities, on the basis of certification by the office of the regional agricultural inspector for Calabria.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests is authorized to advance to the Board, at the beginning of each financial year, not more than 20% of its annual funds.

#### ARTICLE XXVII

In determining the size of properties as provided for in Article II, all rights obtained by transfer to business associations or by acts of transfer without compensation, concluded after January 1, 1948, are null and void. In the same manner, acts of transfer against payment in favor of dependents concluded after that date are null and void. Excluded from these restrictions are transfers of property as part of a dowry, and gifts made to public bodies of social welfare or education. All sales to persons other

than children concluded after November 15, 1949, are null and void.

Furthermore, the Board is authorized to initiate court action, within the limit stated in Article II to render acts of sale concluded between January 1, 1948, and November 15, 1949, null and void.

Actions provided in the preceding paragraph must be initiated within three years of the effective date of this law.

#### ARTICLE XXVIII

The "Casse Depositati e Prestiti", the institutions of agricultural credit and, in general, all banking and insurance companies subject to government supervision are authorized, even if this is in violation of their charters, to provide loans to the Sila Development Board.

The aforementioned institutions are also authorized to discount annual payments due to the Board by the assignees for payment of the price of the land.

The aforementioned institutions may issue mortgages upon real property acquired or expropriated by the Board; they may also furnish guarantees on other goods owned by the Board.

#### ARTICLE XXIX

Land transfers made to the Board, including barter and assignments of land to agricultural laborers under the terms of Article XVI, are subject to registry and mortgage fees.

In receiving land, the assignee must declare under oath that he qualifies under the conditions prescribed under Article XVI.

ARTICLE XXX

The Treasury is authorized to make any changes by its own authority in the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, that may be necessary.

ARTICLE XXXI

The Sila Development Board is authorized to employ the services of the State Prosecutor's Office.

ARTICLE XXXII

All regulations necessary to implement this law are to be issued through executive order by the President of the Republic, as proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests.

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APPENDIX B:

The "Extract" Law

## Appendix B

## THE LAND REFORM EXTRACT LAW

Act #841,

October 21, 1950

## ARTICLE I

The government of the Republic is authorized to apply, with the changes stated in the following articles, the provisions of the Act of May 12, 1950, #230, and its later modifications, to lands fit for redistribution and for agricultural transformation.

The government will determine by executive order, having the force of law, under authority provided for by this law, the boundaries of the territories under the jurisdiction of this measure, before June 30, 1951. The regional land reform agencies, wherever they have already been constituted, will be consulted in this matter.

## ARTICLE II

The government of the Republic is charged with issuing, within six months of the effective date of this act, regulations for the establishment of agencies or of special sections of agencies of settlement or of land reform, as well as the Autonomous Agency of the Flumendosa. These agencies will carry out, within their area of jurisdiction as determined under the preceding article, all of the functions of the Sila Development Board as defined by the Act of May 12, 1950 #230,

and its later amendments.

The Minister of Agriculture and of Forests acts as supervisor of the agencies referred to in the preceding article, coordinates their functions and their tasks in order to fulfill the intent of the present Act.

#### ARTICLE III

The agencies, described in the preceding article, will prepare land reform and land improvement programs for all the districts as defined in Article I of this Act. They will also carry out these programs within lands which are subject to expropriation.

#### ARTICLE IV

For the purposes of this Act, Article II of the Act of May 12, 1950 #230 is substituted by the following statement: "Within the districts affected by this law, private land property, as it existed on November 15, 1949 is subject to expropriation, the portion to be expropriated to be determined on the basis of the taxable income of the entire property as of January 1, 1943, and of the average taxable income per hectare. The taxable income per hectare is obtained by dividing the entire taxable income of the property by its area. However, the lands classified in the land register (cataster) as woodland or as land not under crops are to be excluded both from the calculation of the taxable income and from that of calculating the area of the property.

The proportion of land to be expropriated from landed property owned by landowners, whether they are physical or

legal persons, under whatever title they hold the land, whether it is in community or indivisible property is determined on the basis of a table attached to this law.

The provisions of the preceding paragraphs are to be applied also to properties which are managed under emphyteusis.

Land which has been transferred to direct descendants because of death between November 15, 1949 and the date on which this Act becomes effective is to be included in the calculations of the land holdings of these descendants.

The reform agencies retain the right to acquire by purchase other land not subject to expropriation, by authorization of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

The Minister of Agriculture and Forests may authorize the reform agencies to exchange land, acquired in whatever manner, with other lands which are considered to be better adapted for the formation of small peasant farms.

#### ARTICLE V

As a rule, all woodland is excluded from expropriation. The reform agency, however, has the right to expropriate woods either in the lowlands or on gentle slopes which are susceptibles of agricultural transformation and which are not under restrictions from a hydro-geological point of view.

#### ARTICLE VI

In areas where the old cadastral records are still used, both the expropriating agency and the landowner subject to expropriation have the right of appeal concerning the final establishment of the taxable income, as far as any question

related to the size, the class of productivity, and the type of use of the land is concerned, based on the data of the old cadastral records. The government is hereby authorized to establish, as part of the administrative rules of application of this law, the procedure for appeals as described in the preceding paragraph.

When an appeal, provided for in the first paragraph of this article is pending, the reform agency retains the right to proceed to the temporary occupation of land subject to expropriation procedures. That part of the property which is not subject of the appeal procedure may be expropriated, on a temporary basis, taxable values being based on declaration by the owner.

Excepting the cases referred to in the first paragraph of this article, no other appeals are allowed against determination of the quality and class of lands derived from the cadaster, as far as the establishment of the percentage of land to be expropriated is concerned.

#### ARTICLE VII

For a period of six years, starting with the definite establishment of the percentage of land to be expropriated, landowners subject to the provisions of this law may not acquire real estate by sale among living persons, if such purchase together with land that remains in their property, would exceed 750 hectares of arable land. If such purchase does take place, the arable area exceeding 750 hectares will be entirely expropriated in the manner provided for in this law.

## ARTICLE VIII

Lands, which are subject to expropriation in applying the provisions of the table attached to this law, are to be immediately expropriated, except for dispositions concerning one-third of these lands, as described in Articles IX, X, XI and XIII.

Whenever according to the provisions of the articles referred to above, immediate expropriation of two thirds of the land subject to expropriation takes place, the remaining third, which cannot in any case exceed 300 hectares of area, cannot be disposed of and cannot be subjected to execution. The land reform agency will enter upon the register of deeds of the district where the land is situated such restrictions on alienation.

## ARTICLE IX

A landowner who wishes to retain title to part of the land constituting the remaining third, may request, within 60 days after the date of publication of the expropriation plans, the permission to execute on all of the area of the remaining third the land improvement works provided for by the land reform agency, within a period of two years. Such a request must be accompanied by detailed plan of land improvement measures and measures necessary to create small farms on the land.

In such a case the landowner is also under obligation to carry out improvement of all of the land which remains his property, and which is located within the districts

that are subject to this law, according to plans approved by the land reform agency.

Such works have to be begun by landowners immediately after approval of the land improvement plan and must be carried out within the period provided for by the agency. This time limit, however, may not exceed four years; following the measures of the Act of February 13, 1933, #215 and of the Decree Law of December 31, 1947, #1744.

After the improvement of the lands constituting the remaining third is accomplished, the proprietor has to transfer to the agency one-half of these lands. At the same time he is to be paid the indemnity for expropriation, and reimbursed for the costs of land improvement to the extent that these costs would have been paid by the agency for the completion of these works; however, the state contributions paid to the owner will be deducted. In this manner the owner retains title to one-half of the remaining third.

If a proprietor has not shown, according to the final judgment of the agency, to have started land improvement of the remaining third within two years, he will lose by expropriation the entire area of the remaining third without compensation.

The landowner has the right to choose peasants whom he will accept as owners of the farms created by his improvement of the land. It is necessary, however, that these new owners satisfy the conditions indicated in the Decree-Law

of February 24, 1948 #114, as modified by the Act of March 22, 1950, #144, and that all of the conditions provided for land assignments by the land reform agency be followed.

#### ARTICLE X

This act does not apply to intensively and efficiently operated farms, which are conducted under some form of association with the workers, and provided with modern and centrally available equipment. It is necessary, however, that all of the following conditions apply in order that this exemption may be applied: a. The average output per unit area of the principal crops, calculated on the basis of the preceding five years, must exceed by at least 40% the average for the same crops in the agricultural zone within which the farm is located; b. labor employed, whether permanent or temporary, on the arable land as calculated on the basis of the table appended to this law, and referring to the past three years, must not be less than 0.3 labor units per hectare; c. the economic and social conditions of the peasants who live on the farm must be distinctly higher than the average of the agricultural zone: this refers particularly to the amount of labor available and to the sharing by the laborers of the production results; d. the farm must be divided into small farms and the farmers' houses must satisfy requirements of public health. Certification for the application of the article must be requested from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. The Ministry will issue an exemption certificate.

## ARTICLE XI

A landowner who holds title to more than one model farm of the type described in the preceding article is entitled to exemption from expropriation for only one of these farms, which he may choose.

The others shall be expropriated under the terms of this law and, if possible, will be managed by some form of association among future owners.

## ARTICLE XII

Until the general land reform law goes into effect, the government has the right to proceed to the expropriation also of the model farms as described in Article X, applying the table attached to this law, for the part of such farms in excess of 500 hectares.

## ARTICLE XIII

In the case of ownership of lands which are located in part within the territories as described in Article I, and in part outside these territories, the expropriation under Article IV applies to the land situated within the territory as described in Article I, up to the total application of the quota of expropriation.

## ARTICLE XIV

All expropriations provided for by this law are hereby defined as urgent, and not to be postponed, under the terms of Article 71, the Act of June 25, 1865, #2359.

## ARTICLE XV

The land reform agencies have the right to compel land-owners to provide for the improvement of land in wild olives, if such land exceeds 50 hectares, even if it is located outside the land reform districts. Such transformation must take place according to a previously stated plan and within a suitable period of time.

Once the termination date for the improvement work passes, such land may become subject to expropriation.

## ARTICLE XVI

The following paragraph is added to Article V of the law of May 12, 1950, #230: "Expropriation decrees as provided for in this article may be issued even while the final determination of indemnification is pending, as provided for in Article VII."

## ARTICLE XVII

In the first paragraph of Article VI of the law of May 12, 1950, #230, the word expropriated is replaced "subject to expropriation procedure".

## ARTICLE XVIII

Indemnity for expropriated lands is equal to the final value assessed for the application of the extraordinary progressive tax on the patrimony, as established by Decree-Law of March 29, 1947, #143.

This indemnity will be paid to the expropriated owner in state bonds, carrying an interest rate of 5% net, redeemable in 25 years starting from the beginning of the first

financial year following the date on which this law goes into effect.

The loan which is hereby authorized to be issued at par, will be entered in the main register of public debt. To it will be extended all of the provisions which apply to the main register and to public debt and all of the privileges and easements conceded to bonds and incomes of public debt.

The treasury will establish, by decrees to be issued before June 30, 1951, the characteristics of the bonds, the schedules of interest payments, the schedules and means of redemption, the rules concerning the delivery of bonds and all other necessary measures concerning the issue and placing of the bonds.

#### ARTICLE XIX

Owners who wish or who must complete land improvement work on land remaining in their possession may be paid the indemnity due to them in cash. Such payment is limited to the cost of the work to be completed, after state subsidies have been deducted. In any case, the payment cannot be more than 25% of the total indemnity.

In order to cover the indemnities provided for in the preceding paragraph, the expense of one billion lire for the fiscal year 1950-51 is hereby authorized. Such expense will be against chapter 459 of the budget provisions of the Treasury.

The payment of this sum is to be prorated according to the progress of the land improvement work. Upon advice of

the land reform agency an advance not exceeding 20% may be made for the payment of these land improvement works.

#### ARTICLE XX

Article XXVII of the Act of May 12, 1950, #230 is replaced by the following: All dispositions of Article IV, paragraph 5, concerning land transfers because of death remain unchanged. For the purposes of this law all land transfers among living persons, without compensation, carried out after June 1, 1948 are null and void, as far as the agencies charged with the implementation of this law are concerned. Gifts being part of dowries, and those in favor of agencies of social welfare and education are exempt. Acts of sale to corporate bodies are also null and void if concluded after January 1, 1948.

Land transfers without compensation are deemed all acts of transfer after January 1, 1948 in favor of those entitled to inheritance in direct line from the seller, unless such transfers are recognized as having been made against compensation for the purposes of the registration tax.

In the same manner all transfers of land against payment are also null and void if they were concluded after November 15, 1949.

Lands which were the subject of acts of sale, considered void in this manner, are considered as part of the holdings of the seller, both for the determination of the area subject of expropriation and for implementing the expropriation itself.

In case of the expropriation of properties sold as stated in this article the indemnity will be paid to the purchaser. The right of the purchaser to initiate court action against the seller, in order to recuperate the difference between the indemnity paid and the sale price, remains unchanged.

For three years after the effective date of this law the land reform agencies may contest as simulated all sales against compensation completed after January 1, 1948.

Sales considered to come under the provisions of the Decree-Law of February 24, 1948, #114, as modified by the Act of March 22, 1950, #144 are exempt and the application of Article XI of the above-mentioned Decree-Law remains unchanged.

#### ARTICLE XXI

Land assignment will be made according to the provisions of Article XVII of the Act of May 12, 1950, #230. As state contributions which may be deducted from the expense of land improvement works are those contributions which would be paid by the state according to the Act of February 13, 1933, #215 as later modified.

In assigning such expropriated lands, within the established framework of the assignments, those peasants who have already long-term improvement contracts for the land in question, concluded before the effective date of this law, and who have already carried out substantial and permanent improvement of the land are to be given preferential treatment. For these assignments the indemnity for expropriation will

be reduced, with reference to the cost of the improvements already carried out, according to rules now in effect.

#### ARTICLE XXII

In all reclamation districts which lie within the limits of the territory as defined in Article I of this Act, and within which there have not been formed reclamation districts by the landowners, the land reform agencies are charged with all of the initiatives and tasks of reclamation provided for by the Royal Decree-Law of February 13, 1933, #215, and its later modifications.

#### ARTICLE XXIII

The provisions of the Act and of those of the Act of May 12, 1950, #230, shall be coordinated with the general land reform act.

#### ARTICLE XXIV

Referring to Article V of the Act establishing the Fund For Extraordinary Public Works in Southern Italy, expenses incurred in applying this act within the territories defined in Article III of the aforesaid act, are charged to that fund. For the 10-year period 1950-51 to 1959-60 the ceiling of expenses is 280 billion lire. The necessary funds shall be provided directly to the agencies charged with the implementation of this law.

For the fiscal year 1950-51, the Fund may transfer up to the limit of 28 billion lire for this purpose.

In order to provide for expenses concerning territories not referred to in the first paragraph, for the fiscal year

1950-51 there shall be a provision made to the amount of 7 billion lire, from the expenses provided by Article 3 of the Act for the implementation of extraordinary public works in central and southern Italy, derived from the special fund (Lire fund, referred to in Article II of the Act of August 4, 1948, #1108). For the fiscal years 1951-52 to 1959-50 inclusive, funds shall be provided by transferring the amount of 20 billion Lire annually, provided by the act referred to above for the implementation of extraordinary public works in central and northern Italy.

ARTICLE XXV

The President of the Republic, on proposal by the Minister of Agriculture and Forests, shall issue rules and regulations for the implementation of this act.

APPENDIX C:

Selected Statistics\*

\* from: Riforma Fondiaria, published by Direzione Generale della Bonifica e della Colonizzazione, Ministero dell' Agricoltura e delle Foreste; Fome, n.d. (1964)

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## Appendix C

TABLE I

## Area of Jurisdiction of Land Reform Agencies

<u>Agency</u>	<u>000's Hectares</u>	<u>% of Total Area</u>
Po` Delta	335	5.6
Maremma	995	11.6
Fucino	45	0.5
Campania(ONC)	127	1.5
Apulia-Lucania-Molise	1,502	17.6
Calabria	573	6.7
Sardinia	2,409	40.4
Sicily	2,571	30.0
Total	8,557	100.0

TABLE II  
Expropriated Land

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Area in Hectares</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Pò	43,767	6.5
Maremma	177,433	26.4
Fucino	15,866	2.3
Campania(ONC)	8,328	1.2
Puglia-Lucania-Molise	189,458	28.2
Calabria	75,423	11.2
Sardinia(ETFAS)	45,853	6.8
Sardinia(Flumendosa)	2,499	0.4
Sicily	114,241	17.0
	<hr/> 672,868	
Legal Transfers, Exchanges, etc.	94,173	
	<hr/>	
Total	767,041	

TABLE III

## Financing the Land Reform

	<u>Million Lire</u>
Sila (Law of 1950)	15,000
South and Islands (Extract Law)	280,000
Maremma and Pò (Laws of 1950 and 1954)	89,000
All Reform Areas (Law of 1957)	199,750
All Reform Areas (Law of 1961)	54,000
All Reform Areas (Law of 1963)	20,000
All Reform Areas (Law of 1964)	14,500
	<hr/>
Total 1950-1964	672,250 Million Lire

TABLE IV

Land Assignments, 30 September, 1962

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Area (ha.)</u>	<u>% Acquired Land</u>	<u>% Assignments</u>
farm ( <u>podere</u> )	44,533	474,459	61.9	69.6
<u>quota</u>	45,485	111,623	14.5	16.3
<u>lotte</u> (lots in Sicily)	23,046	93,090	12.1	13.7
to institutions		3,024	0.4	0.4
				<u>100.0%</u>
<u>To Be Assigned Under:</u>				
<u>Sila &amp; Extract</u> Laws	31,565		4.1	
<u>To Be Assigned In:</u>				
Sicily	21,151		2.7	
<u>Not To Be Assigned:</u> (Public Services, etc.)				
	32,929			
Total	767,041		100.0%	

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TABLE V (A)

Assignments Dissolved or Revoked, 30 September, 1963

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Hectares</u>	<u>% Assignments in Agency Area</u>
Pò	2,804	36.1 % of total no. of assignments in area
Maremma	2,477	11.3
Campania(ONC)	117	3.1
Puglia	2,886	8.5
Calabria	1,259	6.4
Sardinia (ETFAS)	963	22.0
Sardinia (Flumendosa)	54	20.9

TABLE V (B)

Assignments Dissolved or Revoked By Type

farms	8,414	15.8 % of total no. of assignments in area
<u>quotas</u>	2,146	5.5
Total	10,560	11.5

TABLE V (C)

Assignments Dissolved or Revoked By Reasons:

Conditions of Contract Unfulfilled:	3.1 %	
Mutually Accepted Recission of Contract:	3.6 %	
Unilateral Breach:(abandonment by Assignee)	4.8 %	
Total	11.5 %	of all Assignments

## TABLE V (D)

Disposition of Land Made Available By Assignments Dissolved  
Or Revoked

Reassigned:	57.5 %
To Be Reassigned:	8.8 %
To Be Added to Other Farms:	33.7 %

TABLE VI

Total Investments Made By Agencies to 30 Sept., 1962

<u>Type</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Billion Lire</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
<u>a.) Reclamation</u>			
land reclaimed(ha.)	565,264	154.5	24.9
trees planted(000's)	141,071	35.4	5.7
irrigation (ha.)	44,580	12.9	2.1
farm houses(no.)	43,253	149.8	24.1
farm & access roads (Km.)	7,361	28.2	4.6
		<hr/> 380.8	<hr/> 61.4
<u>b.) Settlement</u>			
technical centers(no)	341	3.6	0.6
rural settlement centers (no.)	180	14.9	2.4
isolated public buildings (no.)	480	4.5	0.7
others		64.3	10.4
		<hr/> 87.3	<hr/> 14.1
<u>c.) Assistance to Settlers</u>			
technical, financial, social		40.9	6.6
equipment		73.2	11.8
adult education, etc.		6.2	1.0
		<hr/> 120.3	<hr/> 19.4
<u>d.) Cooperatives &amp; Industry</u>			
cooperatives (no.)	940	11.9	1.9
new industrial plants	125	20.0	3.2
(no.)		31.9	5.1
<u>TOTAL:</u>		620.3	100.0

TABLE VII

## Land Utilization

<u>Agency</u> (area in Hectares)	<u>Field Crops</u>	<u>Tree Crops</u>	<u>Permanent Meadows</u>	<u>Woodland</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Pò Delta</u>	31,893	2,096	361	822	35,172
	90.7 %	6 %	1 %	2.3 %	100 %
<u>Maremma</u>	123,975	7,859	11,506	14,724	158,064
	78.4 %	5 %	7.3 %	9.3 %	100 %
<u>Fucino</u>	13,607	173	1,763	---	15,543
	87.6 %	1.1 %	11.3 %	---	100 %
<u>Campania</u> (ONC)	14,198	689	63	201	15,151
	93.7 %	4.6 %	0.4 %	1.3 %	100 %
<u>Puglia-</u> <u>Lucania-Molise</u>	118,890	31,421	28,013	4,797	183,126
	64.9 %	17.2 %	15.3 %	2.6 %	100 %
<u>Calabria</u>	63,293	5,302	9,457	6,532	84,584
	74.8 %	6.3 %	11.2 %	7.7 %	100 %
<u>Sardinia</u> (ETFAS)	25,021	5,539	43,925	13,986	88,471
	28.3 %	6.3 %	49.6 %	15.8 %	100 %
<u>Sardinia</u> (Flumendosa)	2,348	688	989	80	4,105
	57.2 %	16.8 %	24.1 %	1.9 %	100 %

TABLE VII (Continued)

## Land Utilization

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Field Crops</u>	<u>Tree Crops</u>	<u>Permanent Meadow</u>	<u>Woodland</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>TOTAL:</u>	393,225	53,767	96,082	41,142	584,216
	67.3 %	9.2 %	16.5 %	7 %	100 %

x

TABLE VIII

Changes in Land Use (Without Sicily)

<u>Type Crop</u>	1953 (in 000's ha's)	1962 (in 000's ha's)
field crops	184	426
grapes	5,229	36,154
olives	16,940	64,399
others (fruit trees)	4,399	46,794

TABLE IX

Gross Marketable Product\* (Without Sicily)  
Including Land Not Yet Reclaimed

	FIELD CROPS		TREE CROPS		ANIMAL PRODUCTS		TOTALS	
	Million Lire	Index 1953/100	Million Lire	Index 1953/100	Million Lire	Index 1953/100	Million Lire	Index 1953/100
1953	18,611	100	1,316	100	2,490	100	22,417	100
1954	28,296	152	2,388	181	4,724	190	35,408	158
1955	35,344	190	2,828	215	7,395	297	45,567	203
1956	36,047	194	3,714	282	9,600	385	49,361	220
1957	36,864	198	4,947	376	11,884	477	53,965	240
1958	40,384	217	7,613	579	14,714	591	62,711	280
1959	41,631	224	8,171	621	16,900	679	66,702	298
1960	36,497	196	8,575	652	19,478	782	64,550	288
1961	44,556	239	10,962	833	21,398	859	76,916	343
1962	53,886	290	15,980	1,214	23,432	941	93,298	416

\* Except woodland

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TABLE X

## Gross Marketable Product, By Categories

	<u>Field Crops</u>	<u>Tree Crops</u>	<u>Animal Products</u>	<u>Total</u>
1953	83 %	5.9 %	11.1 %	100.0 %
1954	79.9	6.8	13.3	100.0
1955	77.6	6.2	16.2	100.0
1956	73.0	7.5	19.5	100.0
1957	68.7	9.2	22.1	100.0
1958	64.4	12.1	23.5	100.0
1959	62.4	12.3	25.3	100.0
1960	56.5	13.3	30.2	100.0
1961	57.9	14.3	27.8	100.0
1962	57.8	17.1	25.1	100.0

TABLE XI

## Gross Marketable Product By Agency

AGENCY	TOTAL INDEX 1953/100	PER HA.		STRUCTURE OF LAND USE				TOTAL
		Mill. Lire	1,000 Lire	Index 1953/100	Field Crops	Tree Crops	Animal Products	
PO Delta	1953	789	188.8	100	83	4.9	12.1	100
	1962	10,576	307.9	163	57.7	7.9	34.4	100
Maremma	1953	7,425	82.5	---	82.1	7.9	10.0	100
	1962	22,424	156.4	302	56.6	9.9	33.5	100
Fucino	1953	4,673	345.1		78.4	1.4	20.2	100
	1962	7,474	480.9	160	77.6	0.6	21.8	100
Campania	1953	923	152.8		93.8	5.1	1.1	100
	1962	7,141	477.6	773	71.2	3.1	25.7	100
Puglia	1953	4,274	65.7		86.2	9.5	4.3	100
	1962	28,579	160.3	669	51.4	35.9	12.7	100
Calabria	1953	3,643	56.9		83.4	3.6	13.0	100
	1962	11,735	150.4	322	65.8	13.7	20.5	100

TABLE XI (continued)  
Gross Marketable Product By Agency

AGENCY	TOTAL	INDEX 1953/100	PER HA.		STRUCTURE OF LAND USE				TOTAL
			1,000 Lire	Index 1953/100	Field Crops	Tree Crops	Animal Products		
1953 Sardinia 1962	682		9.9		88.9	4.5	6.6	100	
	5,020	736	67.4	683	32.8	14.3	52.9	100	
1953 Flumendosa* 1962	8		3.4			100.0		100	
	349	4,324	86.6	2,533	41.3	28.1	30.6	100	
1953 TOTAL 1962	22,417		71.3		83	5.9	11.1	100	
	83,298	416	171.8	241	57.8	17 .1	25.1	100	

\*prior to 1953, only tree crops.

TABLE XII  
Gross Marketable Product per hectare\* (without Sicily)

YEAR	FIELD CROPS		TREE CROPS		ANIMAL PRODUCTS		TOTAL	
	1000L/ha	Index 1953/100	1000L/ha	Index 1953/100	1000L/ha	Index 1953/100	1000L/ha	Index 1953/100
1953	59.2		4.2		7.9		71.3	
1954	60.8	103	5.1	123	10.2	128	76.1	107
1955	69.7	118	5.6	133	14.6	184	89.9	126
1956	69.1	117	7.1	170	18.4	232	94.6	133
1957	69.2	117	9.3	222	22.3	282	100.8	141
1958	74.3	126	14.0	335	27.1	342	115.4	162
1959	77.0	130	15.1	361	31.3	395	123.4	173
1960	67.5	114	15.8	379	36.0	454	119.3	167
1961	82.1	139	20.2	483	39.4	498	141.7	199
1962	99.2	168	29.4	703	43.2	545	171.8	241

\* Obtained by dividing the value of the Gross Marketable Product of each sector by the entire area under cultivation.

TABLE XIII

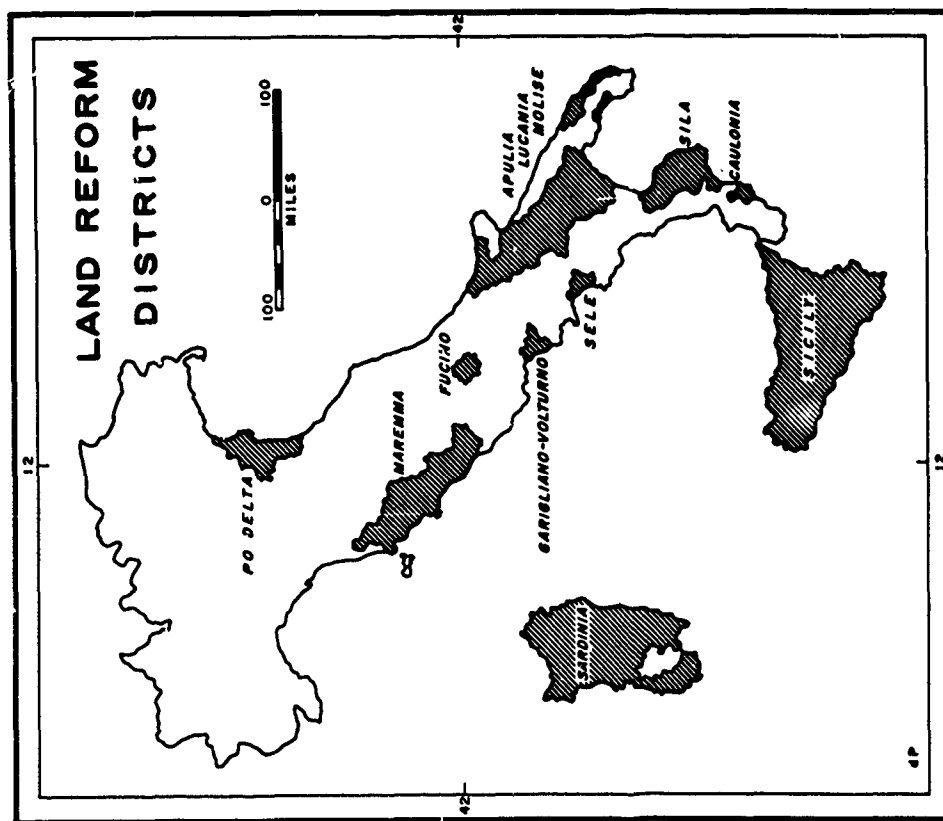
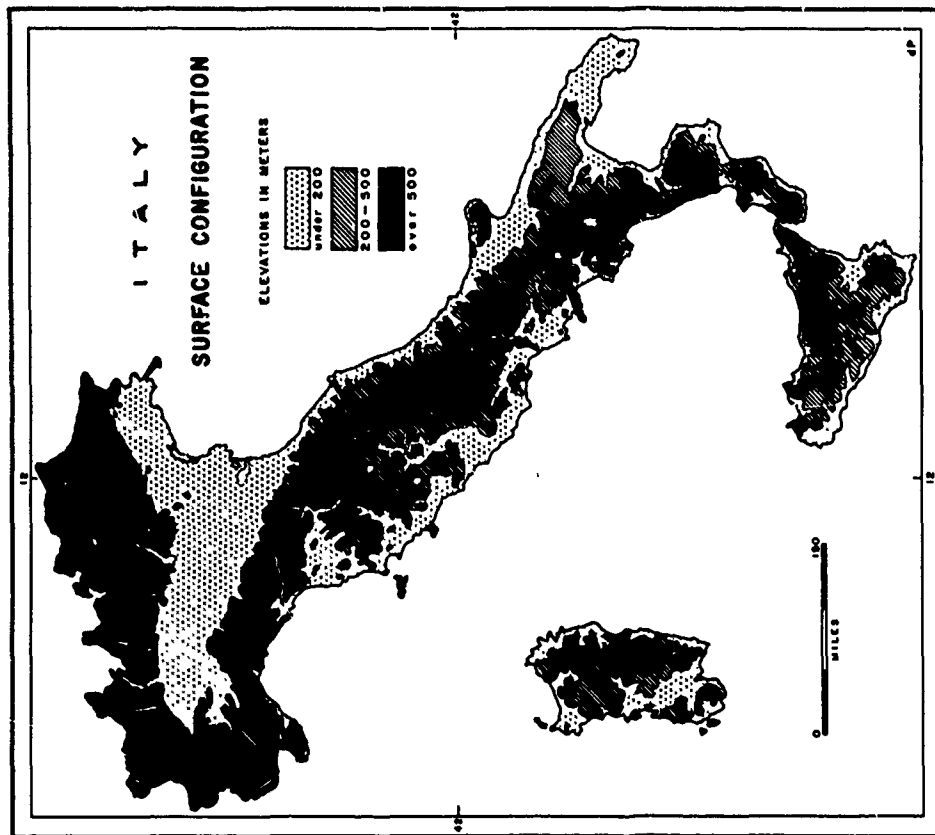
## Livestock on Land Acquired by Reform

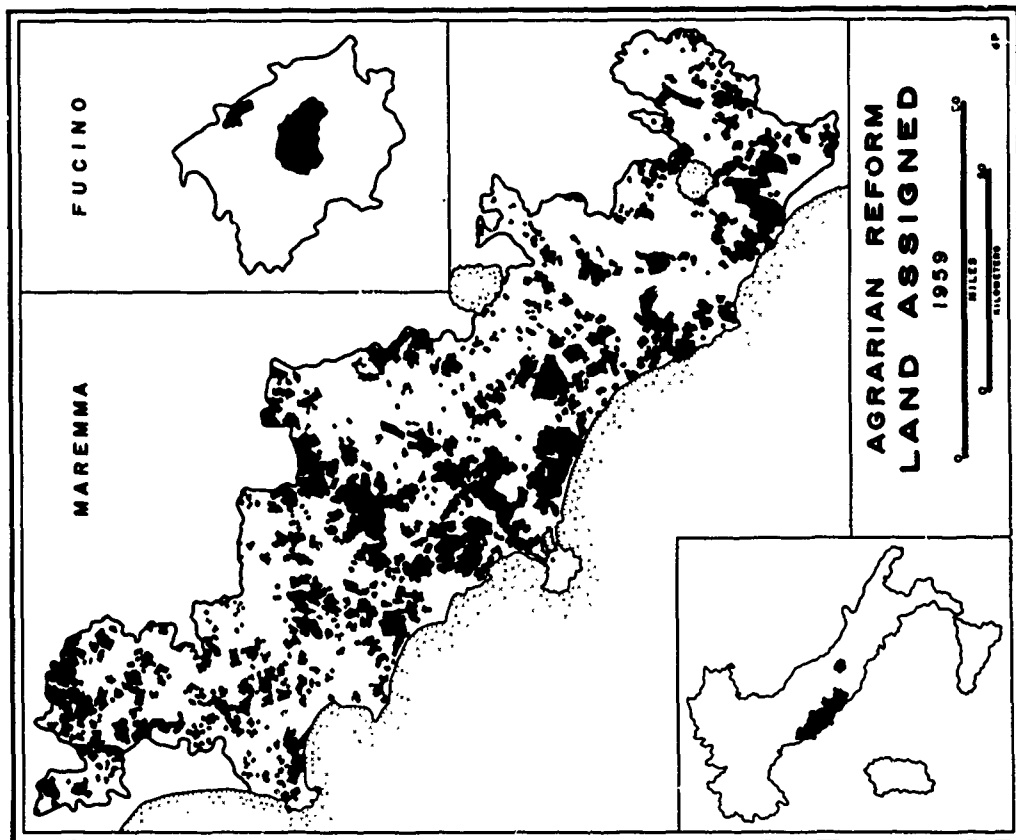
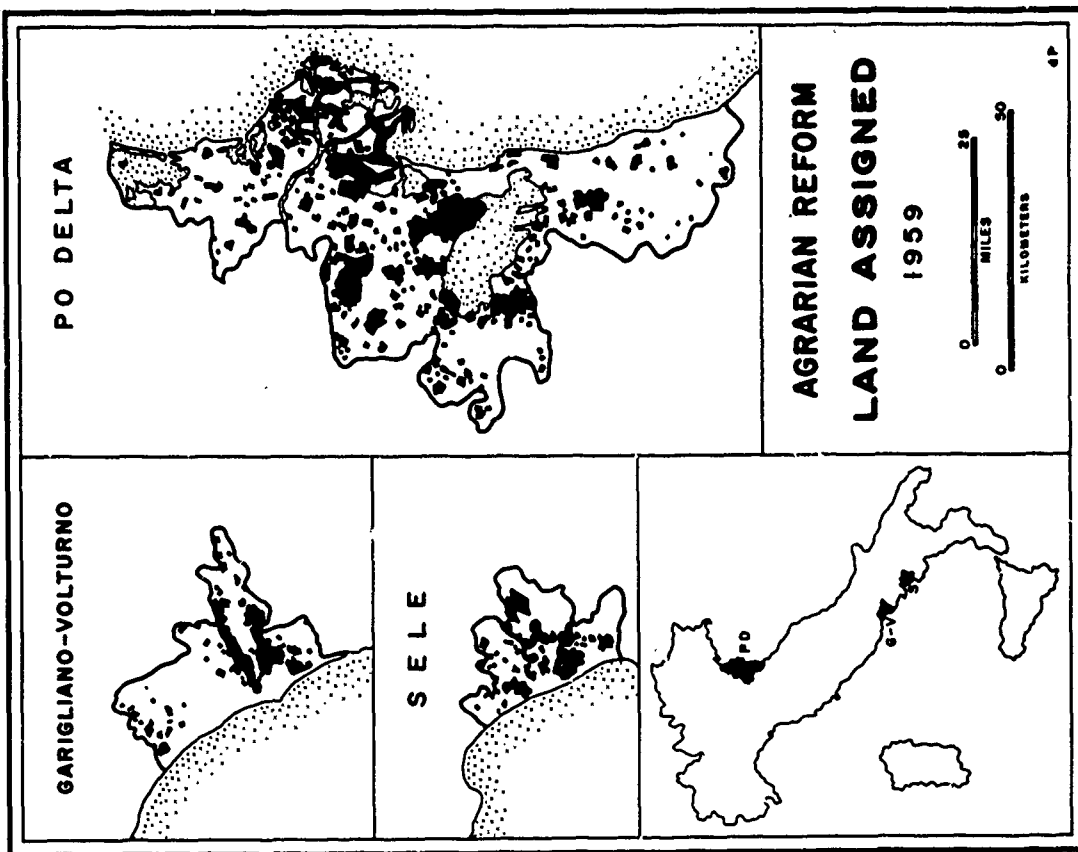
	<u>1952, December 31</u>	<u>1961, December 31</u>	<u>1962, December 31</u>
cattle:	12,000 units	146,000 units	137,000 units
horses:	11,000	34,000	32,000
pigs:	14,000	81,000	79,000
sheep:	42,000	185,000	200,000
poultry:	218,000	1,756,000	1,674,000

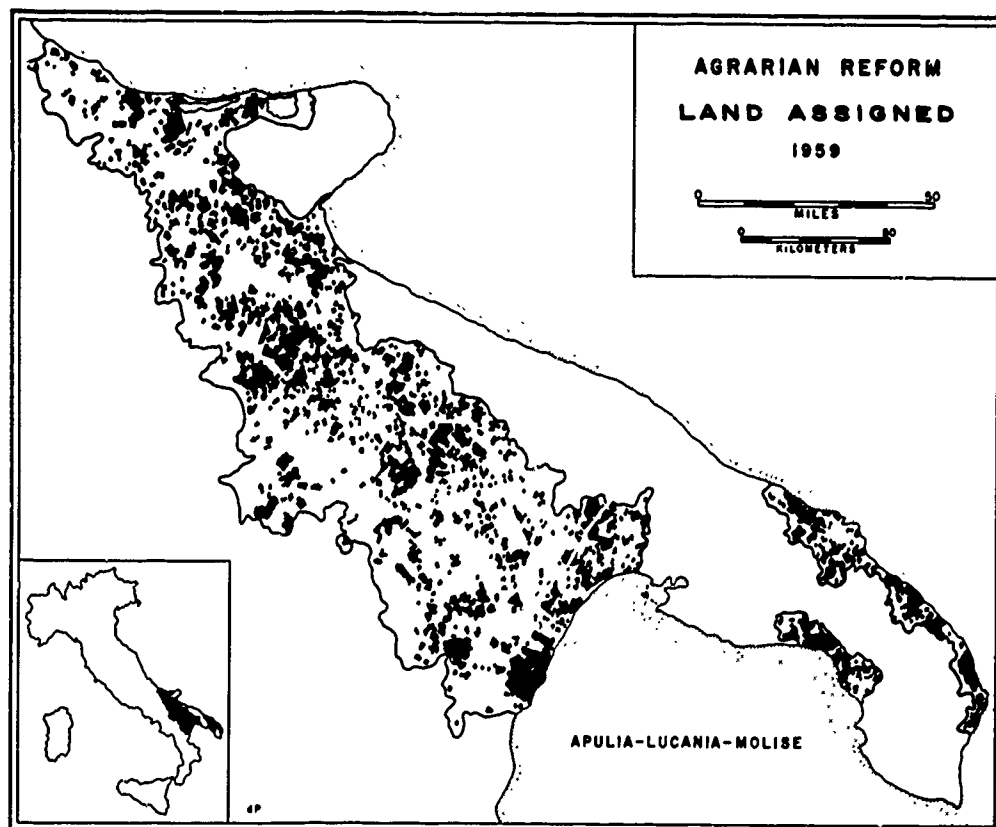
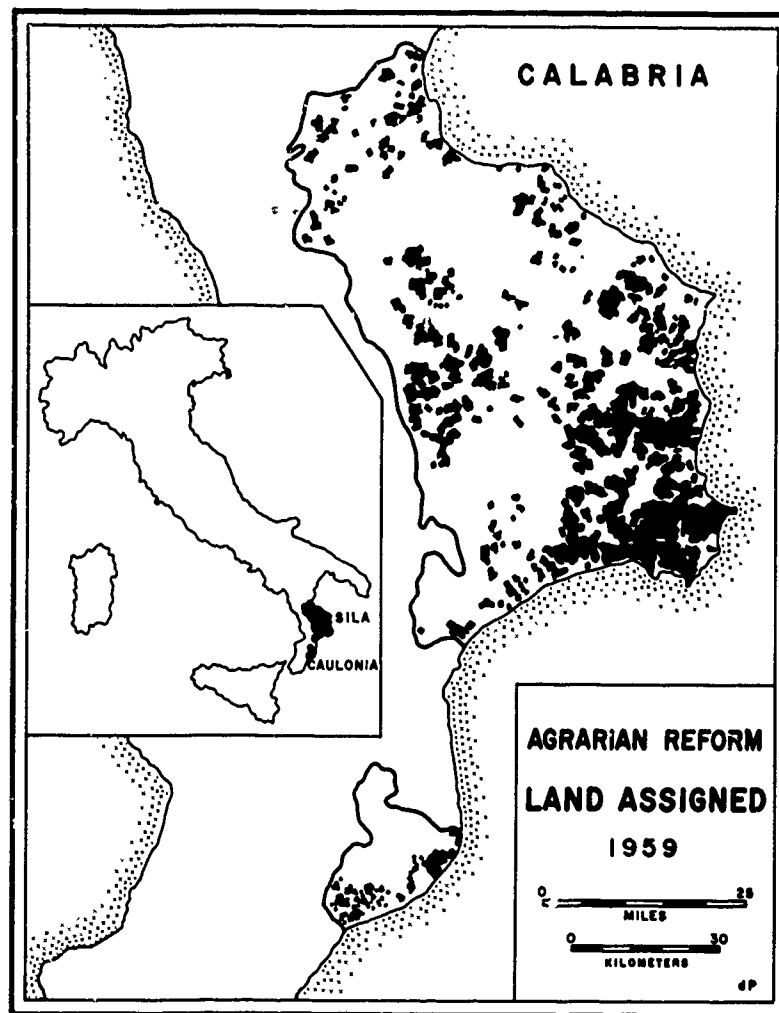
APPENDIX D:

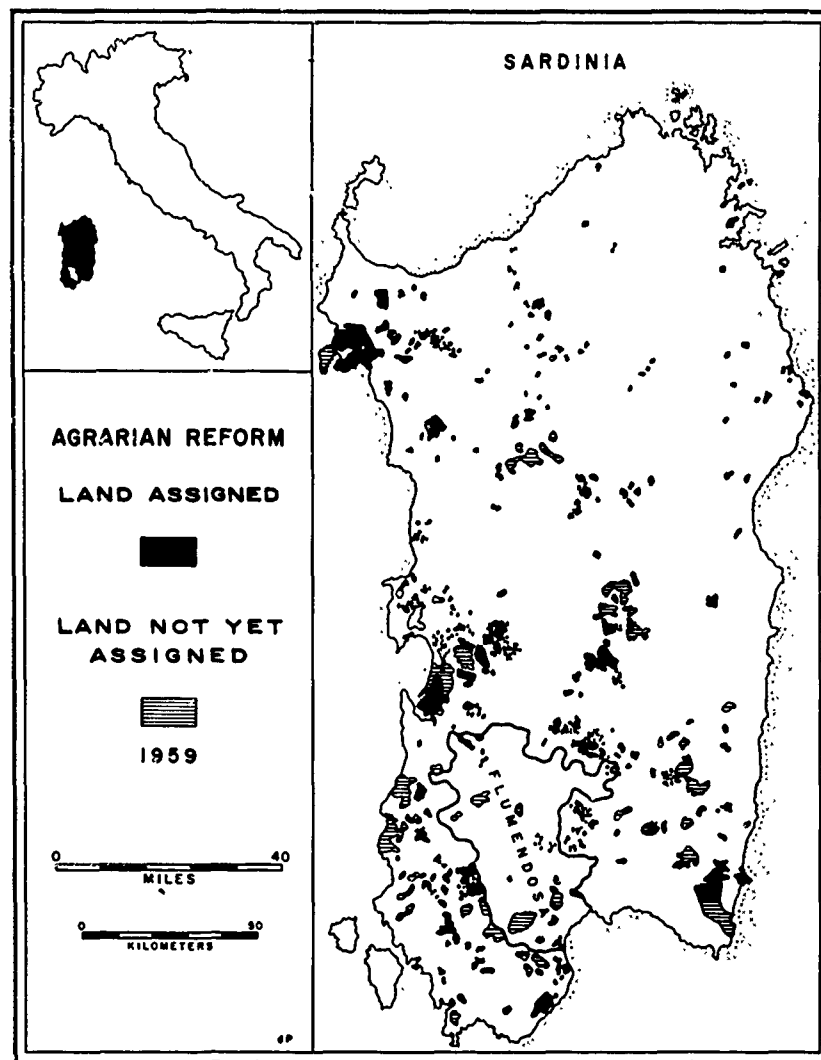
Maps of the land reform districts\*

\* maps by Duilio Peruzzi









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